



DT  
434  
U2  
K62

Cornell University Library  
DT 434.U2K62

On the backwaters of the Nile :



3 1924 028 599 136

# Cornell University Library

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME OF THE

SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND

THE GIFT OF

**Henry W. Sage**

1891

A.304565.

141716.

9306



Cornell University  
Library

The original of this book is in  
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in  
the United States on the use of the text.





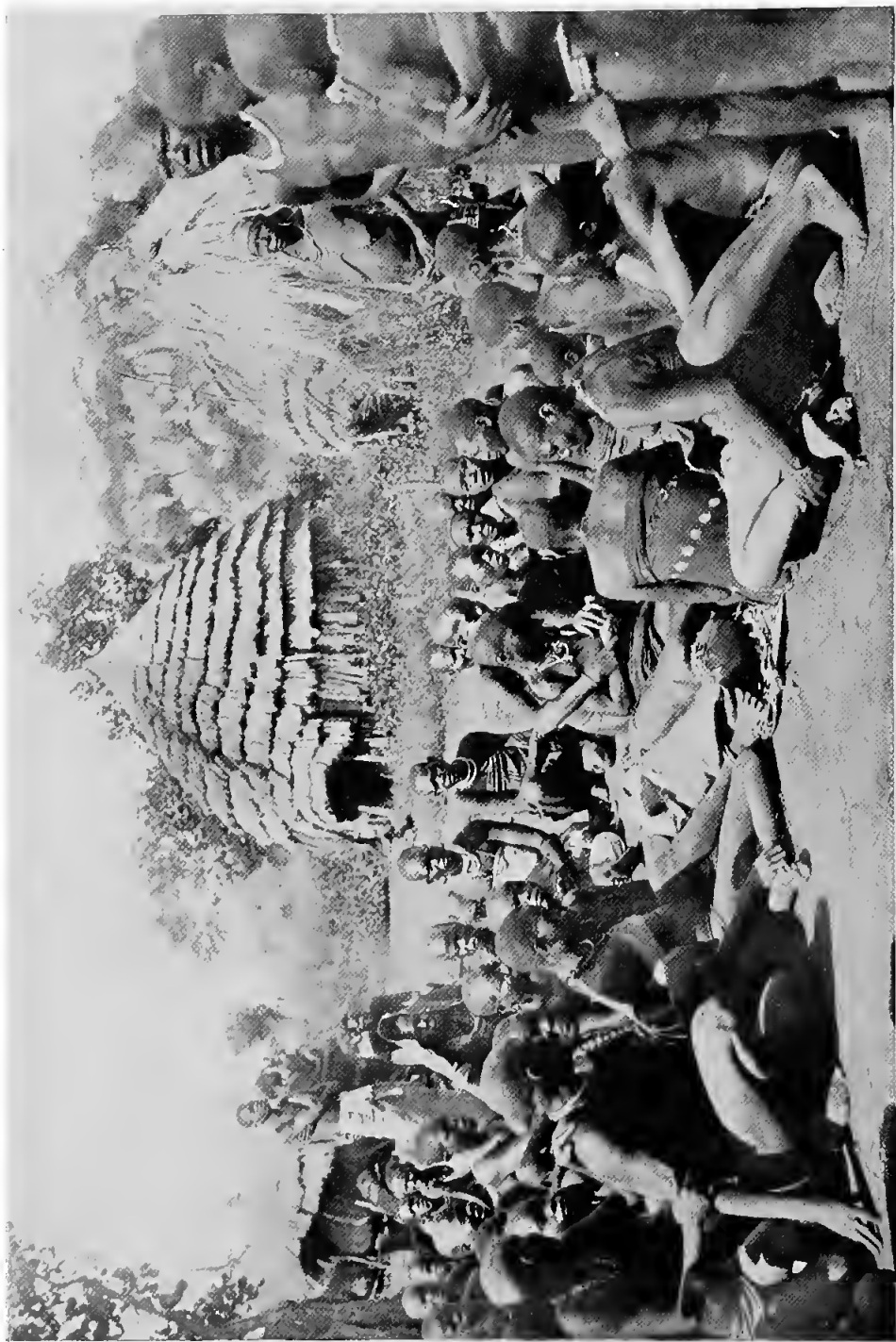




**ON THE BACKWATERS OF  
THE NILE**







TESO FUNERAL ; A POISONED WOMAN.

Note the chief mourners restrained by bands of cloth or the hands of their friends.

(See p. 252.)







# ON THE BACKWATERS OF THE NILE

STUDIES OF SOME CHILD  
RACES OF CENTRAL AFRICA

BY

THE REV. A. L. KITCHING, M.A.  
LATE EXHIBITIONER OF EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

AUTHOR OF

"AN OUTLINE GRAMMAR OF THE GANG LANGUAGE"

WITH 56 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN  
BY THE AUTHOR

AND A PREFACE BY

PETER GILES, LITT.D., HON. LL.D.

MASTER OF EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

T. FISHER UNWIN  
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE  
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

1912

114/16

~~420~~  
17

A 30456

(All rights reserved.)

JK

TO MY MOTHER,  
TO WHOSE GUIDANCE I OWE MY INSPIRATION,  
AND TO WHOSE WATCHFUL CARE I OWE  
MY PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT FOR  
THE WORK OF THE  
MISSION-FIELD.



## PREFACE

WHEN my old pupil and friend, Mr. Kitching, in whose attempts at recording languages heretofore unknown I had both a personal and a professional interest, undertook to write this book I promised him that I would contribute the Preface. But it would be idle to pretend that the modern fashion for those who stay at home to commend by a preface the experiences of pioneers abroad is of any more value than were the laudatory verses in Greek and Latin by personal friends which ushered in learned works two centuries ago. In truth, Mr. Kitching's book needs no such commendation. In a plain and simple style he has recorded what his eyes have seen and his ears have heard among peoples within the British Empire indeed, but some of them as yet little known even to travellers. And herein, if I may venture an opinion, lies the chief value of his work. No great advance is made without being attended by some drawback, and it appears to be a real danger of the recent rapid progress of the science of Anthropology that men in Mr. Kitching's position may be tempted to

## Preface

search for evidence to support theories which they have been taught or which have occurred to themselves, instead of recording faithfully what passes before their eyes. Should this unfortunately happen, the observation of savage life and customs which missionaries have opportunities beyond most men to make, must of necessity be rendered less valuable than it has been in the past, and the criticism of sources in this field, as elsewhere, will have to form a larger part of the anthropologist's task. If Mr. Kitching has theories, whether borrowed or original, he has put them on one side and has given us a faithful picture of the peoples among whom he has passed so many years.

P. GILES.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE LODGE,  
CAMBRIDGE.

*February, 1912.*

## FOREWORD

THIS book embodies the experiences and observations of ten years spent among the outlying tribes of the Uganda Protectorate. It makes no pretence at being a scientific study of Anthropology, but aims rather at representing, as it appears to the traveller and dweller among them, the life of races still savage or but lately raised from savagery, in the agitation of a first contact with "other customs, other minds."

For a right understanding of the African native, it is above all important to know him and converse with him as he is in his daily occupations and favourite haunts, not as he is after contact with civilisation in the service of the white man, or after instruction in letters and religion. An attempt has therefore been made in these pages to put on record details of the daily life and surroundings of the people dealt with, with such of their *obiter dicta* as may seem to throw light on their methods of thought and motives for action. By this means it is hoped that some may be enabled better to realise the raw material out of which the missionary

## Foreword

has to make his convert, or the Government Commissioner his soldier, his judge, or his ruler. Three chapters have been devoted to personal experiences and life in the Uganda Protectorate in order to give some idea of the way in which information has been gathered in the course of various journeys through the country and the acquaintance made of the native friends whose conversation has supplied the material for much of the later chapters. At the same time a clearer picture may perhaps be gained of the routine of life in Uganda, as it is lived out of sight of the world by some of the Empire's sons who have taken up the "White Man's Burden."



## NOTE

In the spelling of native names, &c., the usage has been adopted that is followed in literature printed for Uganda. In the Bantu dialects, Luganda and Lunyoro, *ng* is written as such and is pronounced as in the English “stronger.” In the Nilotic and Teso languages this sound of *ng* is not found, but the symbol *n'* is used to denote the soft *ng* in the word “singer.” The letter *c* in all dialects represents *ch*; the symbol *ñ* is the equivalent of *ny* in English. . . . In referring to members of Bantu tribes, the prefix *Mu-* indicates the singular and *Ba-* the plural.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	ix
FOREWORD . . . . .	xi
NOTE . . . . .	xiii

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY : BANTU TRIBES . . . . .	I
---------------------------------------	---

Uganda and Buganda—Lack of people and open water—  
 Four other kingdoms—Mwenge and Kabarega—Butiti  
 and Kabarole—Bunyoro and its provinces—The Bakonjo  
 —The Basoga and their troubles—Two cannibal tribes—  
 The sudd-dwellers—Buffer tribes.

### CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTORY : NON-BANTU TRIBES . . . . .	16
---	----

Nilotic tribes—Origin in the Soudan—The Gan' tribe and  
 their country—A race of hunters, not travellers—Physique  
 and character—The Madi, Latuka and Bari—The Teso  
 tribe—Waterways and climate—A dense population—  
 Early administration—Physical characteristics—Language  
 affinities—A heterogeneous protectorate.

# Contents

## CHAPTER III

	PAGE
FIRST EXPERIENCES . . . . .	38

Early work in Toro—A disaster and condolences—Perpetual building—Butiti and itinerations—A trip to the snows—Off to new work—Crossing the Nile—Independent Nilotics—Joining Mr. Lloyd—Station on Mount Keyu—Furlough.

## CHAPTER IV

PASTURES NEW . . . . .	54
------------------------	----

Return to Patiko—Removal to Teso—A sleeping-sickness camp—Selection of N'ora station—A burglary—All in the day's work—Interrupted services—Early work in Teso.

## CHAPTER V

ON THE ROAD . . . . .	67
-----------------------	----

Delights of safari—Memorable camps—Toro forest—Strange pets—Disturbed dreams—Hippo-hunting on Lake Salisbury by moonlight—Native ideas of hospitality—Making friends.

APPENDIX TO PART I. . . . .	81
-----------------------------	----

---

## PART II

### CHAPTER VI

THE AFRICAN HOMESTEAD . . . . .	91
---------------------------------	----

All-pervading smoke—Ventilation, the enemy—Native architecture—Bachelor quarters—"Butt and ben the hoose"—Cattle kraals—Granaries—The lake-dwellers and their gondolas—Ambitious buildings.

# Contents

## CHAPTER VII

	PAGE
THE FOOD SUPPLY . . . . .	107

The dominant interest—Energetic cultivators—The preparation of millet and potatoes—Meat-hunger—Loathsome morsels—Hunts and hunters—Fish, mushrooms, and fruit—The inevitable cow—European *v.* African meals.

## CHAPTER VIII

LANGUAGE . . . . .	125
--------------------	-----

The point of view—Gaps in the vocabulary—A written language in the making—Traps for translators—The key to idiom—Proverbs of the Banyamwenge—Fables.

## CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL LIFE . . . . .	145
-----------------------	-----

Primitive animality—Semi-civilisation—Marriage the great aim—The status of woman—The cult of the hunter—The advantages of polygamy—Free love—The purchase of wives—Bunyoro wedding ceremony—A passion for authority—The all-important drum—Baganda agents—Native courts—Devolution run mad—Wanted, a Solomon—The black man's "Don't"—The mystery of European etiquette.

## CHAPTER X

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST . . . . .	166
---------------------------------------	-----

Four stages in a baby's life—The trials of a mother—Dangers increasing—Baby's toilet—Burns and wild beasts—Beginning to work—Domestic education of the girls—Names and naming—Black and white boys.

# Contents

## CHAPTER XI

	PAGE
DRESS AND ORNAMENTS . . . . .	185

Ideas of decency—Styles of hair-dressing—The *giwic* and hair helmets—Pencils of glass—Dressing for a dance—Armlets and wrist knives—Feminine fashions—Sandals—Teso costumes—Torturing bracelets—All-conquering calico—Trousers, their acquirement, use, and abuse—European garments—Soap and water at a discount—The doubtful value of clothes.

## CHAPTER XII

CRAFTS AND IMPLEMENTS . . . . .	203
---------------------------------	-----

The coming of the curio-hawker—Extreme prices—The hoe *facile princeps*—Native bellows—Styles of hoe-handles—The uses of the spear—Various knives—Shields and axes—Baskets and their uses—Primitive art—Woodwork—Dug-out canoes—The potter—Civilised industries.

## CHAPTER XIII

PASTIMES . . . . .	222
--------------------	-----

Indifference to toys—The love of pretending—A spearing competition—Namuziga—Attending court—A favourite game—Musical instruments—Rat-hunting—Dances—European games and music.

## CHAPTER XIV

SICKNESS AND DEATH . . . . .	236
------------------------------	-----

Fear and folly—The origin of disease—Methods of revenge—Edeke—Medicine men—A séance—Poison—The dancing cure—Splints and isolation—Cupping and plasters—A cure for warts—An amateur operation—Modes of burial—Extravagant mourning—Funeral of a Patiko chief.

# Contents

## CHAPTER XV

	PAGE
SUPERSTITION . . . . .	256
The demons of Mwenge—Leaping to the drum—Demon offerings—A three-mouthed pot—Sacrifices to Edeke—Praying to Amon'i—Petty superstitions—The dread of lightning—Dangerous twins—The powers of "medicine"—Witch-doctor <i>v.</i> physician.	

## CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	270
Half-devil and half-child—Veneered devilry—Natural gentlemen and natural savages—The advent of the white man—A lesson in motives—Education—All-essential religion—Influence dependent on language proficiency—Wanted, the best men.	

APPENDIX TO PART II. . . . .	281
------------------------------	-----





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TESO FUNERAL ; A POISONED WOMAN . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
	FACING PAGE	
MOMBASA : PUBLIC GARDENS AND TROLLEY LINES ON THE		
MAIN STREET . . . . .		3
MOMBASA : THE ENGLISH CATHEDRAL . . .		3
MWENGE WOMAN GRINDING MILLET . . . .		9
SMALL HUTS ON THE SUDD OF LAKE ÑAGWO : DEVIL-HUT		
IN FRONT OF THE LEFT-HAND HUT . . . .		13
BAKENI GIRLS PADDLING IN OLD DUG-OUTS ON LAKE ÑAGWO		13
A TWO-STORIED HUT IN PATIKO . . . . .		19
THE COTTON INDUSTRY IN TESO . . . . .		26
FINE FEATHERS MAKE FINE BIRDS . . . . .		33
OLD MUD AND WATTLE CHURCH AT BUTITI, MWENGE .		41
LOADING UP THE FERRY BOAT AT PAJAO . . . .		47
METHOD OF BLOWING THE GAN' WHISTLE . . . .		53
SLEEPING-SICKNESS PATIENTS GATHERED AFTER SERVICE		
IN THE CHURCH . . . . .		59

# List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
A TESO MAN WITH SHELL HEAD-DRESS . . . . .	65
A TESO GIRL . . . . .	65
CAMP ON THE UMA RIVER, BETWEEN NIMULE AND GONDO- KORO . . . . .	71
A PATIKO HOMESTEAD IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY . . . . .	77
A CHAT IN A PATIKO VILLAGE . . . . .	83
A TUNNEL ENTRANCE TO RAISED BACHELOR QUARTERS AT DOKOLO IN THE LAN'O COUNTRY . . . . .	87
CAMP ON RUWENZORI WHERE IT RAINED ALL DAY . . . . .	93
ARCH OF LOGS AT THE ENTRANCE TO A TESO VILLAGE . . . . .	99
A MUKENI CHIEF AT HOME, LAKE ÑAGWO . . . . .	105
GRAIN HARVEST IN MBOGA, NOW PART OF THE CONGO STATE . . . . .	109
THRESHING MILLET; PATIKO . . . . .	115
WINNOWING MILLET . . . . .	115
A MUKENI AND HIS FLOATING GRANARY . . . . .	121
FISH-TRAPS ON LAKE ÑAGWO . . . . .	121
"LAKA TAR TWATWAL!" . . . . .	127
TESO BOYS . . . . .	127
TOUCHING-UP THE WAR-PAINT . . . . .	132
LISTENING TO A LAUGHING-SONG ON THE PHONOGRAPH . . . . .	138
A CHRISTIAN WEDDING AT BUTITI, MWENGE . . . . .	145

# List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
A SHAM FIGHT IN PATIKO . . . . .	151
AT THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT; KING DAUDI KASAGAMA OF TORO AND HIS KATIKIRO SITTING TO HEAR DISPUTES .	157
HAIR HELMET, DECORATED AT THE TOP WITH A POMPOM OF OSTRICH FEATHERS . . . . .	167
BABY'S BATH . . . . .	173
DISTRIBUTING MILK TO CHILDREN AT TORO DISPENSARY .	173
A HERD OF GOATS AND SHEEP, PATIKO . . . . .	179
THE KARARMOJO CHIGNON; THREE VISITORS AT KOLIMON'S VILLAGE . . . . .	187
METHOD OF DRESSING THE HAIR IN PATIKO . . . . .	193
A GAN' DANDY . . . . .	199
VILLAGE ON THE BORDERS OF THE PIGMY FOREST . . . . .	209
NATIVE DRAWINGS ON A PATIKO GRANARY . . . . .	215
TESO SAWYERS AT WORK . . . . .	221
THE GAME OF NAMUZIGA, PLAYED BY BOYS IN TORO . . . . .	225
A GAN' DANCE IN FULL SWING . . . . .	231
GAN' BRAVES DECKED OUT FOR A DANCE, AND FULLY ARMED . . . . .	235
A TESO WITCH-DOCTOR . . . . .	239
AN AMATEUR OPERATION . . . . .	239
EXTRACTING AN EYELASH; TORO DISPENSARY . . . . .	243

# List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
CHIEF OBONA, WHOSE FUNERAL IS DESCRIBED ON PAGE	
254 . . . . .	249
FUNERAL DANCE IN HONOUR OF CHIEF OBONA . . . . .	255
GRAVE OF CHIEF OBONA . . . . .	255
PRAYING TO AMON'I FOR RAIN . . . . .	261
DANCING FOR THE CURE OF THE SICK ; TESO COUNTRY . . . . .	267
A TESO VILLAGE . . . . .	273
GROUP OF N'ORA SCHOOLBOYS . . . . .	279

# ON THE BACKWATERS OF THE NILE

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTORY—BANTU TRIBES

“And what should they know of England,  
Who only England know?”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE Protectorate of Uganda is a miniature edition of the British Empire. It has its central core or nucleus, where is situated the seat of government, and whence go forth the administrators and ordinances to penetrate to every part. It has its race of enterprising travellers and traders, who find their way into every hole and corner as rulers, shopkeepers, tourists, and disturbers of the peace. It is made up of races as diverse as those which compose the white part of the Empire, and which have as little in common with one another as an Indian and a Maori.

Yet to most people in the homeland, and to the majority of casual visitors, it is just Uganda. The

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

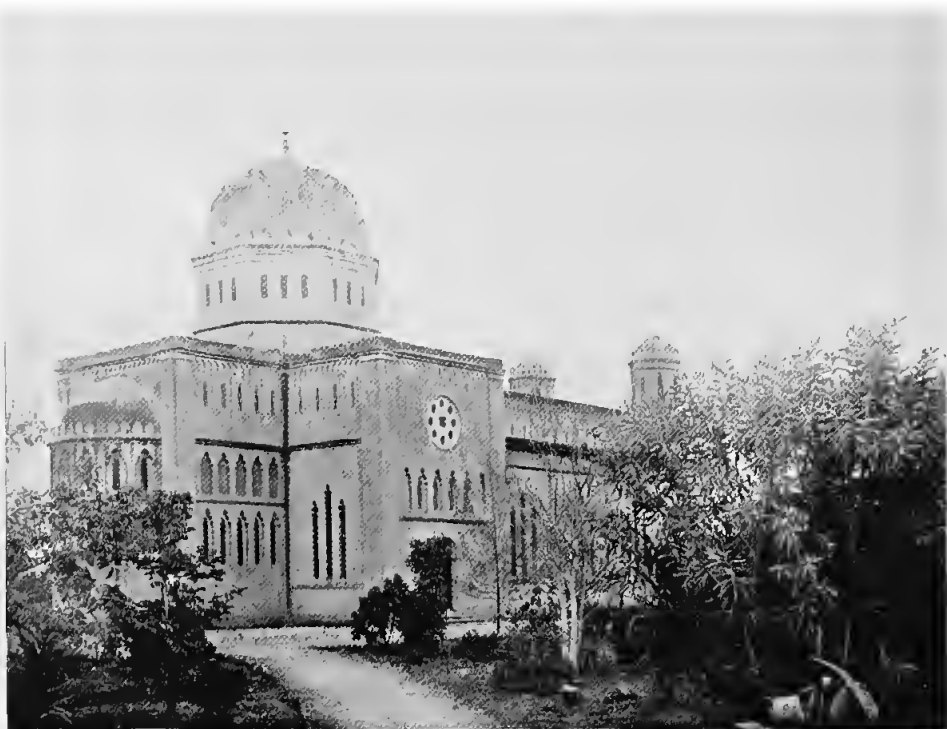
tourist lands at Kilindini, and perhaps gets no nearer than a trip on the so-called Uganda Railway, which has not one single rail in the Uganda Protectorate. Or he visits Entebbe, rickshaws inland to "do" the stock sights of Kampala, and goes on his way rejoicing in the possession of a dozen picture postcards and an impression that he has seen Uganda. Another will descend upon us from the north by the Soudan Government steamer, and spend the two or three hours allowed at Gondokoro in exposing a roll of kodak films on the palm-trees and wharf labourers; he will ask where the elephants are or where they keep the lions, and return to his cabin with a complete set of Uganda stamps purchased from the Government clerk, to congratulate himself on having discovered by personal investigation that Uganda is a flat, sandy country, covered with thorn-trees and dome palms, and too dry to grow even pine-apples or paw-paw.

Even many residents of long-standing are familiar only with the now well-known core of the Protectorate, the kingdom of Buganda, with its native parliament, police force, motor roads, markets, and other appurtenances of civilisation. The dominant impression of the country, as one leaves the capital with its white-robed throngs, is one of loneliness. Hill and dale succeed one another with monotonous regularity, but except for the passers-by there seem to be no people. On every hand the luxuriant vegetation, both wild and cultivated, appears to cover the whole face of the





MOMBASA ; PUBLIC GARDENS AND TROLLEY LINES ON THE MAIN STREET.



MOMBASA ; THE ENGLISH CATHEDRAL.



## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

switchback-like landscape, and to leave no room for human habitation. It is only by the ear that the traveller learns of homesteads hidden away behind the walls of elephant-grass or amid the banana groves ; the bleat of sheep and goats gives evidence of prosperity, the twanging of a harp or the tootle of a reed suggests an abundant leisure, or the clank of iron on iron or of a wooden mallet on soft fig bark the existence of industries even in a land where the labour of one woman may extract from the fertile soil the sustenance of a family.

Another conspicuous lack is open water. The traveller is told he must cross a river, and may almost do so without noticing it ; the path may change to a causeway, the wall of reeds into towering papyrus, the odour of moist earth or dry grass into one of rank weeds and stagnant pools. But all of the river that is visible is an occasional crawling stream of red ooze, with perhaps one swifter cleaner rivulet flowing through a clearing in the middle of the swamp, and wide enough to need a log bridge to span it. Only by constant labour can even the ten-foot clearing necessary for the causeway be kept open ; from the roots of the papyrus spring hosts of shoots, which, feeding on the debris of their fallen ancestors, hang dew-laden across the pathway, to drench with icy showers the early morning wayfarer ; up their stems rush trailing creepers, which stretch clinging fingers from plant to plant and lock all into a natural trellis-work. The very reeds used to fence in the bridge take root and sprout, and join with

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the deathless grass in smothering man's handiwork.

Only when the summit of a hill is reached is any clear idea to be obtained of the true nature of the country; houses are then seen to be nestled in among the banana plantations and potato fields, women with their water-pots are passing and re-passing on their way to the well, boys are driving out the flocks to feed, the river that seemed but a swamp is seen to open out for a space further down the valley, and patches of forest make black splashes upon the grey-green of the jungle grass.

This kingdom of Buganda will always be referred to in this book as Buganda, its proper native name, as distinct from Uganda, which is used to designate the Protectorate as a whole. But little will be found here about the Baganda themselves, among whom the writer has never been stationed, although having constant dealings with the many individuals scattered in other parts of the Protectorate, in their capacity as teachers of religion, Government agents, settlers, or traders.

Round the central kingdom cluster other four kingdoms, Bantu tribes more or less akin to the Baganda in physical, mental, and political characteristics. To the north and west lie the Banyoro with their branches and subdivisions, now consolidated into the two kingdoms known as Bunyoro and Toro. They inhabit a country similar to Buganda in the wearisome reiteration of swamp and hill, in the density of vegetation and apparent lack of population. In physique the people are

## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

distinctly inferior to the Baganda in many districts, and show much less aptitude for education. The branch of this tribe which will be most often referred to is that known as the Banyamwenge, the inhabitants of what is now a province of the Toro kingdom, but was once a separate fief of the notorious King Kabarega. Even now some of the Banyamwenge may be heard to speak with a measure of regret and respect of the blood-thirsty monarch who is still to them just *Omukama*, "the King," as if he were still in power. In the heyday of prosperity, Kabarega kept many of his cows in Mwenge, which is excellent pasture-land, and his dependents grew fat and lusty in caring for them, and doubtless basked in his favour as keepers of his hoarded wealth.

Mwenge is a thinly populated district, bounded on the west by Toro, reaching away northward up to the south-west corner of the Albert Lake in Butuku, and eastward to the smaller provinces of Kitagweta and Kyambalango, which lie next to the borders of Buganda. It is famous locally for its hoes, esteemed for their durability and thickness of backbone. The chief place in the district is Butiti, where I made my home for two years or so on my first arrival in Uganda.

From a point about half-way on the road from Butiti to Kabarole, the capital of Toro, is to be obtained one of the best possible views of the snow-peaks of Ruwenzori, the mighty mass of which dominates the landscape in every part of Toro. As the traveller tops a certain hill in the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

early morning, he sees the sun light up the glaciers with exquisite tints of pink and delicate primrose ; the lower slopes still lie in the twilight of dawn, or glow with a dull purple, while the snows of the topmost peaks catch the earliest rays and glitter with all the hues of an aurora borealis. The colours deepen as the sun climbs higher ; the gloomy mass beneath takes form as the light picks out hill and valley, until with growing daylight the icy fairyland recedes into the gathering clouds and the world beneath is warmed into activity for the labours of another day. Its mystery gone, Ruwenzori takes up again for the hours of daylight its rôle as barrier between West Africa and East, between Uganda and the Congo State.

Continuing the march westwards from Butiti, Kabarole is reached some twenty or more miles from the former place. Now that the great cathedral in Buganda has been destroyed by lightning, Kabarole possesses the finest church in the country, a new hospital is nearly completed, and altogether the station is one of the best equipped in all Uganda. The upper classes of the people are mostly Banyoro, differing only slightly in speech from the Banyamwenge, while the lower classes belong in part to the true Batoro, a somewhat inferior tribe now more or less merged in the Banyoro and almost indistinguishable.

Toro is bounded on the north by Bunyoro proper, a separate kingdom inhabited by people of the same stock as those of Toro and almost identical in habits and dialect. Mutual jealousy

## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

rather tends to exaggerate slight variations of pronunciation and vocabulary, but even Europeans from either district are intelligible in the other. The northern part of Bunyoro is known as Busindi, and the Basindi are somewhat superior to the Banyoro in physique and capacity for work; we found them most useful as porters and workmen in the Nile province, where the local braves were too fond of dances and personal adornment to take readily to regular employment outside their own daily routine. The hoes from Busindi are most esteemed next to those from Mwenge.

The sub-district Bugoma is famous locally for its fine forest, which teems with life of every size and description, from the herds of immense elephants and the chimpanzees which are frequently met with, down to the gorgeous butterflies which often throng the air and paint the pools in the paths in countless brilliant hues and patterns. Next to Bugoma is Bugahya, where the dialect spoken is so broad as to correspond to the Yorkshire which Tennyson loved to imitate. From these districts the plateau dips suddenly over to the Albert Lake, on the shores of which live people whose habits have been moulded by the abundance of fish and the proximity of the brine supplies, which provide them with exports.

On the foothills of Ruwenzori and on the sides of the range nearly up to the bamboo line, live a little known tribe of low order, whose language has so far not been reduced to writing. These are the Bakonjo, whose physical hardihood enables them

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

to hunt the conies and sleep in the open close up to the snow-line, but whose tastes do not exclude rats and snakes from their daily dietary. Those who accompanied our party up to the foot of the glacier would sleep sometimes in caves, but at other times in the open, with no protection from the cold but each other's bodies and a huge fire round which they squatted, leaning each man against his neighbour, for all the world like a row of monkeys huddled on a branch in the forest.

To the south of the kingdoms of Toro and Bunyoro lies that of Nkole, a great stretch of plain on which feed the numerous herds of cattle which are to the Banyankole as food, wealth, family, almost the whole of their being in fact. Their language, while closely akin to Lunyoro, is softer in sound, *j*, for instance, being pronounced something like *sh*. Tall and thin, with aquiline noses and high cheek-bones, the men often suggest to the eye the mummified forms of Pharaohs to whose descendants the Banyankole are perhaps related. With this people the writer is acquainted only as represented by the cow-herds employed all over Uganda, and to describe the race from such data would be much like judging of the people of London from the riff-raff met with at the Derby. The Uganda cow-herd is always expected to be a liar and a cheat, and sharp indeed is the white man who can keep pace with his depredations on the milk, if not on the calves. So the Banyankole will find no place in these pages.

Another tribe about as difficult to deal with are







## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

the Basoga. With a high reputation for expert thieving and a nature that seems to be unable to believe in the honesty of the intentions of any other person, the average Musoga slinks through life on the principle of "Do somebody, or you'll be done!" When employed as workmen, they are perpetually trying to get an advance of wages, and if for some just reason a deduction is made from the amount paid, the recipient will go away with an air of perplexed and injured innocence, as if to say, "Here's this European cheating me again!" There is no honour even among these thieves themselves. We employed many Basoga in the Teso country, and found that none of them dared leave any clothes or other property unprotected in their huts for an hour. The better off among them would hire a boy to watch the hut, the poorer carried all their belongings on their backs, or did them up in a bundle which was laid beside them while at work.

Some sympathy is certainly due to them for their many recent troubles and hardships. Their country lies to the east of the Nile, where it takes its birth from the Victoria Nyanza at the Ripon Falls. Surrounded on three sides by water, for the most part low and thickly wooded, Busoga was at one time the garden of Uganda, and a thriving, populous province. But it is also one most beloved of tropical pests such as mosquitoes, *embwa* or dog-flies, termites, wild pigs, leopards, and worst of all the tsetse fly. It is as the Irishman said, a "disthressful country." One may get used to

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

having one's person devoured by the *embwa*, one's house by the termites, and one's children by the leopards and hyænas. One may even ignore the bites of the tsetse, until he brings the dread infection of the sleeping-sickness. Then, as the deadly lethargy of the disease creeps over the infected, the equally deadly numbness of despair and indifference and fatalism paralyzes the healthy. Weeds choke the banana plantations; the plots of sweet potatoes grow smaller, the ever-hungry wild vegetation devours foot after foot of cultivated ground, and in its trail spoils, tramples, and devours the wild pig. The sleeping-sickness has "let in the jungle."

Then upon a people decimated and enfeebled by disease comes that ever-dreaded tropical scourge, a drought. Famine completes what the tsetse has begun, and whole countries are left to the ravages of the jungle folk, who thrive accordingly and grow bolder and lustier as their natural foes diminish in numbers and hardihood.

Only by strenuous endeavours upon the part of the Government and missions has the total extinction of the Basoga been prevented. Final depopulation of infected areas by statute has limited the scope of sleeping-sickness devastation; large expenditure of time and effort on the part of all Europeans, and of money on the part of the Government has saved the lives of thousands who must otherwise have died of famine. Rewards for the destruction of pigs encourage organised hunts, which rescue some crops at least from the devourer.

## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

And last, but not least, the building of the short railway from the Ripon Falls to Kakindu, the highest point where the Nile is navigable, is now providing work at good wages, with ample rations, for many men who may thus be enabled to make a fresh start in life.

On the confines of the Protectorate in the extreme west and the extreme east lie the two cannibal tribes of Uganda, the Bahuku and the Bagisu. The Bahuku are the last tribe met with to the west before the traveller plunges into the gloomy wilds of the pigmy forest. They are not very numerous and speak a Bantu dialect of which nothing much is known at present, and they have as yet no written language, no European having ever lived among them. I found them in 1902 very wild and shy, owing to the unwelcome visits of Belgian soldiers, and with difficulty persuaded one or two to lead me for an hour or so into the great forest. On the same occasion pigmies were not to be seen, having fled south for the same purpose of avoiding the attentions of uncontrolled police!

The other cannibal tribe, the Bagisu, inhabit the slopes of Mount Elgon, where they are crowded together in a comparatively small area of fertile country, which they have brought to a high degree of cultivation. The clan system is well developed among them and its regulations rigidly observed. Each clan, for the most part, occupies a strip of country running down from the foothills of Elgon, and to that strip it is obliged to keep for all purposes. Many are the fights due to the poaching

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of firewood and pasture, and the mission dispensary at Nabumale is often busy with broken heads and limbs in consequence. The cannibal practices indulged in are many of them very loathsome and disgusting, and the tribe naturally present a low type of character in every respect which provides the very stoniest of soil for sowing the seed of the Christian religion. Their dialect is one of the oldest forms of Bantu speech in Uganda, and exhibits a great fondness for sibilants, which is rather irritating to a stranger at first. A letter of frequent occurrence is an explosive *s*, resembling *ts* in pronunciation, and corresponding to *z* in other kindred dialects, such as Lunyoro. I found that a knowledge of Lunyoro enabled me to gather the meaning of Lugisu to some extent, even when it was quite unfamiliar to me.

Like the Banyoro, the Bagisu combine the cultivation of plaintains with the growing of grain; they plant large areas with plaintains, but as often as not allow them to get quite overgrown with grass and weeds, so as to be useless for food production. So much time is spent on the manufacture and consumption of beer, that little is left for clearing and weeding, and famine threatens in consequence, whenever a dry season results in a poor millet crop. The Bagisu keep large numbers of very poor cattle, but so overdrive and overmilk them that it is no wonder the stock is a degenerate one. Often when cycling along the roads, one is put in danger of one's life by the sudden appearance of a herd of harassed cattle, which come dashing





SMALL HUTS ON THE SUDD OF LAKE NAGWO : DEVIL-HUT IN FRONT OF THE  
LEFT-HAND HUT.

(See p. 102 )



BAKENI GIRLS PADDLING IN OLD DUG-OUTS ON LAKE NAGWO.

(See p. 103.)

## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

out on to the road, heads down and tails up, goaded into a wild gallop by the yells and blows of two or three boys, one of whom probably brings up the rear clinging to the back of a young bullock and immensely enjoying his ride. In some parts the cultivation is so thick that the poor beasts have difficulty in finding anything to eat, another factor in the degeneration of the stock.

There remain for mention, before we pass to the non-Bantu tribes, two minor sections of the Basoga race. The Bakeni hardly merit the distinction of being regarded as a separate tribe, but their habits of life so cut them off from all other people that notice must be taken of them in this place. Dwelling only on the sudd, they are found, of course, only on the lakes and larger waterways of the eastern portion of the protectorate. On Lake Kioga, with its many arms and backwaters, they are naturally most numerous, but they are also found on Lake Salisbury, and the great spreading, swampy river called Mpologoma. Hidden away behind the dense masses of papyrus, which is to them the plant of many uses like the banana to land-dwellers, they often escape notice by the casual traveller, and are quite safe from molestation by either man or beast. To mosquitoes they seem indifferent, and almost equally contemptuous of the crocodiles, which, however, are not found of any great size in sudd regions; large crocodiles are only found in open water, and where there are open sandy banks available for nests in which to lay their eggs.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

So far as I have held conversation with the Bakeni, during many crossings of Lake Kioga to various points, and occasional explorations of the less frequented waterways, their language appears to be but little removed from Lusoga, and presents merely the local variations always to be found in any country. No missionary work has yet been definitely attempted among them, and, of course, it could only be done by inducing the people to attend churches on the nearest land; no foreigner could adopt their form of life, and no building could well be erected on the sudd larger than their own small round huts.

The Bagwer'e are also related to the Basoga, and form a sort of buffer tribe between them and the Teso to the north-east, and the Nilotic Badama to the south-east. They are a rather dull race, with heavy unintellectual faces, and speak a very broad form of the Lusoga dialect. In habit they have somewhat assimilated themselves to their Teso neighbours, and there is no distinct boundary line between them, as they shade off the one into the other. At the same time, we found them less unpleasant to deal with than the Basoga proper, and less thievish and suspicious.

To the north of Bunyoro there is another buffer tribe, the Copi, a section of the Nilotic people to the north of the Victoria Nile, who have come south and adopted to some extent the customs of the neighbouring Basindi. To cover their accustomed nakedness they have adopted loin-cloths and, for the women, kilts of bark-cloth, to which their



## Introductory—Bantu Tribes

ancestors were total strangers ; the shape of their huts and style of thatching has been adapted to the materials most plentiful in the land of their adoption. At the same time they have modified their language by introducing Bantu forms and idioms.

Such are the Bantu tribes of the Uganda Protectorate, all more or less related in habit, appearance, and speech. Their dialects all present to the unaccustomed student the difficulty involved in discovering the root of a word, in separating the simplest form from the mass of agglutinations which provide the various inflections or shades of meaning. A whole sentence may appear as a single word, which has to be broken up into its several components before its parts can be looked for and interpreted by help of grammar and vocabulary. For instance, in a letter recently received from Butiti the word *ndigitundamu* occurs, meaning " I will sell it and get out of it " ; of this only *tunda* will be found in the vocabulary ; the remainder consists of the pronoun *-n*, tense prefix *-di*, objective pronoun *-gi*, and suffix *-mu*, meaning " out of." A more extreme instance is given in the grammar of the Lunyoro language, viz., *tinkakimuherayoga*, of which only the letter *h* remains of the original word *ha*, " to give," on to which all the rest is agglutinated ; the meaning of the word is " I have never given it to him there."

We pass now to the consideration of the non-Bantu tribes, with simpler, if more irregular forms of speech, and presenting few features of similarity to their Bantu neighbours.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTORY—NON-BANTU TRIBES

“Since spoken word Man’s spirit stirred  
Beyond his belly-need,  
What is it Thine of fair design  
In thought and craft and deed.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

ON the east and north of the Uganda Protectorate lie the Nilotic and other tribes which are less familiar, even to the readers of missionary periodicals, than the Bantu stocks, although they probably outnumber them. Speaking generally they are taller, more industrious, more prolific, but less advanced in civilised habits, than their Bantu neighbours. They are more frankly childlike and animal in their view of life, in their primitive modes of thought and economy, in their light-hearted irresponsibility and friendliness, and independent disregard of constituted authority. Living in countries which labour under the agricultural disability of a severe dry season, with a light soil and comparatively thin vegetation, they raise crops for daily sustenance which are radically different, being for the most part such as can be gathered in and stored in granaries, instead of the standing banana

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

plantations which yield food all the year round in Buganda. The styles of building are adapted to the species of grass most common in the districts, as well as to the fear of draughts natural to people devoid of all clothing or bedding. The entire suspension of all agricultural pursuits during the dry season allows time in some parts for frequent hunting expeditions, which produce a keen alertness and bodily fitness adding much to the character and physique of the tribe.

The Nilotic tribes of Uganda all appear to belong to the same original stock, although now known by many various names. The original home of this stock is matter for conjecture and argument, but it seems most likely that the immediate origin of all the tribes of this group, inhabiting most of the country from Lake Kioga to Khartoum, was from the country lying between the sudd region on the White Nile and the borders of Abyssinia. Missionaries living among the Jieng people, commonly known as the Dinkas, have learnt of a tradition that these people came from the east to the country they now inhabit on both banks of the Nile. The Shilluks to the north say that they came from the south, from a big river. The Gan' people could give me no tradition as to their origin, previous to their residence in their present district. Now the Shilluk and Gan' dialects are much closer to one another than they are to the Jieng, and it seems probable that there was a first migration from the original home of the stock to the east of a portion who settled for a time on the Nile, and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

were later split in half by a second migration of what now is called the Jieng tribe. Part went north and became the Shilluk or Shula people, part went south and became the Gan' or Acoli. The popular names of all three tribes seem to be akin, perversions of words meaning black or dirty; in the Gan' language the word *macol* ("black") seems to have been perverted by Bantus into Acoli, and so with the other names. This theory as to the origin of these tribes, while based upon language relationship, is yet supported by general evidence of more reliable character in the physical features and the habits of the peoples.

While the Jieng remained to some extent homogeneous and spread in one body across the Nile, the Gan' section gradually threw off portions which became separate tribes. Part of the original main body is now known as the Lan'o people, which extends as far south as Lake Kioga. The Copi tribe, between the Basindi and the Victoria Nile have been previously mentioned as a buffer between Nilotics and Bantus. Others of the Gan' migration continued their wanderings as far as Budama, and now live isolated from their allied stocks by Bantu tribes, the Bagwer'e and Bagisu. Still farther south we find yet another branch of the same people, now known as the Joluo, or Nilotic Kavirondo, living close to the terminus of the Uganda Railway, in what is politically British East Africa. The small section known as the Kumam, on the north shores of Lake Kioga, appear to be part of the Lan'o who quarrelled with the rest of the tribe, and moving





A TWO-STORIED HUT IN PATIKO.

(See p. 97.)

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

a little southwards, became affiliated to the Teso tribe, from whom they borrowed many words and inflections.

Of all these different sections the Gan' are to some extent typical, both in physique and customs, and it is of them that this book treats when Nilotics are referred to generally. Their country presents many features of difference from Buganda ; there is for the most part a complete absence of forest and elephant-grass, both so plentiful in Buganda. The weary succession of swamp and hill is replaced by rolling grass plains, often stretching for miles without a break ; the Bantu method of calculating distance by the number of *mitala* (each *mutala* consisting of a hill and a swamp) is rarely employed in consequence, and Bantu travellers in the district often complain how misleading is their favourite system of reckoning. Instead, the Gan' always describe the length of a journey by the arc that will be traversed in the heavens by the sun before the destination can be reached.

Swamps are few and far between in the Gan' country. Instead we find rivers and streams rushing through more or less deep gorges ; in the rainy season it is well to bear in mind the rule that bids the traveller always sleep on the far side of a river ; what is now a burbling rivulet may be converted by a storm of rain in the night into a raging torrent twenty feet deep, filling the river-bed to the brim. On the other hand, if the river is full when first approached, a few hours' waiting will generally reduce it to a stream that may be jumped

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

across. In places these rivers spread themselves out into small lakes which provide delightful swimming-baths. One such, near the village of a chief named Laboke, some seven hours away from our station among the Gan', had shelving rocks leading gently down into the water on one side, while in the centre the water was so deep that one could not find the bottom; the stream which fed the lake was too small to support crocodiles, so that bathing was perfectly safe. As a result of the abundance of bathing-places, many of the boys and men in the Gan' country are able to swim, a none too common accomplishment in Uganda. On one occasion one of my porters, a very short man, was saved from drowning by some of my boys, when carried off his feet crossing a swollen river, the water being up to his neck.

Another feature of the Gan' country is the frequent occurrence of great piles of rocks constituting the only hills. The very light soil of the district seems to have been washed down almost into a dead level, except where the presence of these rocks served to keep it together. In the case of the Guruguru Hills the rocks attain sufficient proportions to permit of inhabitants, and on this group huts are dotted about wherever enough level ground appears to give room for building.

The population is thin, and game in consequence is plentiful. The Gan' people being exceedingly keen hunters, but not what would be called good sportsmen, have practically exterminated some of



## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

the smaller antelope, such as *cobus cob*, by constantly killing females and young without discrimination ; the method of hunting with nets and fire is particularly hard on the young, which have neither the cunning nor strength to run the gauntlet of the spearmen, and may be driven from their otherwise secure hiding-places by the searching flames. The tougher hartebeest and more solitary reedbuck have fared better, and waterbuck and bushbuck are also fairly common. Elephants are scarce, owing no doubt to lack of forest cover, but some are killed in the same manner as antelope, by a circle of fire, backed up by spearmen.

The thinness of population has another effect, in making cleared roads very scarce. Little travelling is done in the wet season while the grass is long, by the Gan' themselves, and there has been hitherto no Government to have roads made. The only cleared paths are those made from the villages to the fields, the custom in this district being to herd the sheep and cattle near the villages, and to select ground for cultivation at some distance, as much as one-half to a mile away. As the road to the selected plot is of course in use every day, the users think it worth while to clear the grass, and so avoid the cold dew. Cold is always paralyzing to an African, and in Toro, where the proximity of the Ruwenzori Mountains makes the climate wet and comparatively cold, it is difficult to get anybody out of the huts in the early morning, and still more difficult to persuade one's porters to leave their fires in the clammy

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

dawn ; the idea of warming oneself by vigorous exertion is one that does not appeal to those who are used to finding all the warmth they need in the rays of a tropical sun. But in the warmer Nile province the people are early risers and early workers, off to the fields usually by the time the sun is well up and long before the dew is dry, so paths are cleared to protect the bare legs from the chill embrace of the dew-laden vegetation.

In physique the Gan' people are equal to, if not superior to, any tribe in Uganda. In a photograph, perhaps, they may appear skinny and lanky, but in fact they are rather lithe and sinewy. They are not such heavy eaters as some Bantu tribes, adopting the fashion of smaller and more frequent meals rather after the European custom. Our Bantu boys always said that the Gan' ate very little, and it is a fact that the effect of a meal was never so apparent to the eye in their case as it often is in Bunyoro, for instance. Owing to their constant hunting and greater prosperity, the Gan' are able to obtain a much more varied diet than other tribes, meat being frequently eaten. The large areas cultivated provide abundance of all vegetable food, and the huge herds of sheep and goats which are not seldom met with allow of occasional meat meals, even when hunting is prevented by the wet season. At the same time, long hours of work in the fields and longer hours of hard walking and running when on the trail of game, develop the muscles and lengthen the stature ; hence tall

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

men are common and athletic figures the rule among the Gan' people. Natural selection has done the rest, having had a free hand, as it were, in a district which civilisation and sanitation have not touched, and the result is a tribe singularly stalwart and free from disease, while at the same time small in number and not increasing.

The character of this tribe is also very attractive in many respects to the missionary. They bear a bad character with the Government officials as recalcitrant and unruly, but want of organised and regular control owing to the anarchy prevailing in the district, accounts for this lawless condition, which was made worse by the unwise methods, to put it mildly, of some officials, and the constant change of administrators. Individually the Gan' is independent, manly, and self-reliant, with some contempt for all constituted authority, and sublime indifference to the opinions of Bantu tribes. Each man as a rule takes his own line, and is little influenced by his fellows or cares little for their support. His own women have more weight with him, and hen-pecked husbands are not unknown even among the chiefs. The superiority of other people is a thought which seems far from him, even the European appealing to him chiefly as one who has guns and an unlimited supply of ammunition, and in a less degree as the inventor (possession is supposed to imply personal manufacture) of the bicycle, which he does not covet, and the phonograph, of which he is rather in awe as of supernatural character.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

Among the Gan' there is very little likelihood of a mass movement, or even clan movements, towards the white man's religion; a chief does not carry his people with him as he does in Bantu districts. Fashionable Christianity is therefore not to be feared; each man takes his own line in religion as in social matters. A man will sometimes go off and build a tiny village of his own, quite by himself, rather than live with those with whom he does not agree, and the same would doubtless be the case when religious convictions clashed. There is no rigid adherence to ties of soil or chieftainship as among the Bagisu or the Baganda. Consequently the missionary has magnificent material for the making of stalwart Christians, men who are at the same time by no means lacking in mental power, while their physical characteristics make for dignity and respect among their compeers.

Perhaps the least admirable thing about the Gan' people is their language. Whether it prove to be a degenerate or an undeveloped speech, the fact remains that the dialect is very poor in vocabulary and still more lacking in grammatical forms. Fine turns of expression are almost impossible, and few models exist in the way of verbal nouns and so forth which enable the language to be expanded by the introduction of new forms. The introduction of foreign words is, of course, necessary, but they do not seem to become naturalised readily when there are no inflections or other changes possible to give a familiar sound to a new word. Nubian

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

Arabic, a somewhat grammarless and “ dog ” form of that ancient tongue, supplies most of the deficiencies in Gan', words being rarely adopted from Bantu dialects, except when their origin is ultimately Arabic or otherwise foreign.

The existence of a more elaborate grammar and of aspirated consonants, as *dh*, in both Jieng and Joluo, while they are absent from Gan', rather points to a degeneration of the language in the Gan' district after the Joluo section had gone on further south. Sufficient materials are hardly available yet for the final settling of the question where the original home of the Gan' was, and how far their language affinities indicate a true identity of origin with the Shilluk and Joluo.

Encircling the Gan' tribe to the west and north are three tribes which are comparatively little known. The Madi are in occupation of the country along the Nile from Wadelai to Gondokoro. The Latuka lie to the east of Gondokoro, and are famous locally for their fine brass helmets, manufactured by themselves. A much larger tribe are the Bari, who begin to the north of the Gan' people and reach well up into the Soudan on both sides of the Nile. Their language has been reduced to writing by German scholars and seems to bear some resemblance to the Teso dialect. They appear to have suffered much from the raids in the old days of the Dervish hordes from the north, and are perhaps the least dressed and decorated tribe I have come across. They also paid the highest prices for cows, their own herds being scanty and poor.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

The Bari have a reputation of being a treacherous lot of people, difficult to deal with and slow to improve, but have perhaps been made so by frequent bitter experiences of the treachery of others.

Our attention is now to be turned to an entirely separate group of tribes, which linguistic considerations connect with the famous Masai and Nandi tribes in British East Africa. To this group belong the Turkana and Suk peoples, living north-east toward Lake Rudolf, and the Karamojo, a pastoral and nomad tribe to the north of Mount Elgon.

The group will be represented in this book by the Teso people, who inhabit a tract of country some eighty miles long and about the same in breadth, between Mount Elgon and Lake Kioga. Similar to the Gan' country, this district consists of rolling plains, interrupted at intervals by piles of great rocks, which amount at times to the dignity of being called hills. These appear to be remains and last evidences of a higher level once extending over the whole country. As in Patiko, the soil is light and sandy, and only where held together by these piles of rocks has it been able to withstand the scouring of the tropical rain-storms. In the holes and caves of these rocky hills are numberless hiding-places for hyænas and leopards, which are fairly common and most difficult to hunt, owing to the abundance of cover for them. Porcupines also haunt the smaller caves, and their quills may sometimes be picked up, though the animals them-



# THE COTTON INDUSTRY IN TESO.

The representative of the Uganda Company buying cotton at N'ora.





## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

selves are seldom seen. The rapid streams and rivers characteristic of the Gan' country are not common in Teso, where wider valleys tend to the formation of the Buganda style of swamp, choked with grass and papyrus, the very slight gradient of fall in most cases also contributing to the same result. The presence of several lakes, however, provides considerable areas of open water, which teem with varied bird life, to say nothing of the fish, crocodiles, and hippo. Largest of these, and most important, is Lake Kioga, a straggling piece of water, the extended arms of which provide waterways in every direction, which are to some extent already utilised by the people, and are being made available for trade and travellers by Government steamers. The widely separated tribes of Busindi, Busoga, Lan'o, and Teso are now being linked up by a steamer service that calls at Kakindu, Port Masindi, and Bululu, and a not inconsiderable export trade is being done from Bululu in cotton and ground-nuts and semsem. An extension is being arranged to Pingiri, and it is hoped that eventually connection may be established by water with Lake Salisbury, which would open up to transport facilities a large new area extending to the borders of Karamoja.

Lake Salisbury is a long, narrow sheet of water, mostly open, and less liable to blockage by sudd islands than Lake Kioga, except at the eastern end, where it communicates with Lake Gedge by a narrow channel through thick barricades of sudd. The swampy river which drains its

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

waters into Lake Kioga is for the most part shallow and sudd-blocked, with stretches of open water, and small lakes, on which live numberless birds and some of the sudd-dwelling Bakeni. At present a dug-out can only make its way down with the greatest difficulty, but it is thought to be possible to clear a channel wide enough for a small steamer. This is actually being done now on the arm of Lake Kioga, known as Nagwo by the people on its shores, in order to establish communication as far as a point opposite N'ora, so that the most populous part of Teso may have a port giving through water transport to Kakindu. At this point, Kakindu, is to be the terminus of the small railway now under construction from Jinja; when this is completed, a complete chain of communications will be available for the exports of all tribes living around these two big lakes, right down to the coast at Mombasa. At present there is great difficulty in getting the cotton and other products grown out of the district, and many tons of cotton are sometimes kept lying in the bazaars in this Eastern Province, because of lack of transport.

Teso is a district with a future before it. Possessing a light black soil, and a series of well-defined seasons, it is admirably suited for the growing of cotton, while it has a sufficient rainfall for some kinds of rubber. Other exports of less value are found in crops like semsem and ground-nut, the latter of which is a very favourite food of the people. At the same time, it has few

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

areas of uncultivated country, the population of some 200,000 being distributed fairly evenly over the small district; and the density of population has had two resulting advantages, one of which appeals to the native and one to the European.

In the first place, destructive wild animals are comparatively rare; lions are almost unknown, elephants and buffalo are only seen in the outlying parts of the district. Leopards and hyænas give some trouble, but the terrible wild pig, with his ever-busy snout, is absent from the potato fields. The little birds which devastated the ripening crops in the Nile province, or were kept at bay with much expenditure of time and vigilance, are only found in small numbers, and are ignored.

This feature of the Teso district is from the point of view of the European resident something of a drawback, there being little or no shooting obtainable. Guinea-fowl are plentiful in places, wild duck are to be found on the lakes, and occasional antelope are met with, mostly duiker, which are sometimes captured alive by the natives and brought to us for sale. But for any real sport, the resident in Teso must go to the surrounding districts; the fauna consist only of small fry such as jackals, weasels, and monkeys. Birds abound chiefly on the lakes, and include ibis, snipe, cormorants, herons of many kinds, and the rather rare and stately *Balæniceps rex*, or whale-headed stork, which may be seen standing in the swamps or sudd, with its monstrous bill resting on its soft grey breast, as if sunk in meditation.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

Pelicans are common, and flocks of the beautiful white egret drift down to feed like tiny showers of snow. But on the whole wild life in Teso has given way to man, who has little difficulty in maintaining his supremacy over the lower orders.

The advantage of a dense population that appeals to the European resident is that it renders the district easy to travel in. There is an abundance of good roads to make cycling easy, and numerous rest-camps at convenient intervals, which are kept in repair and free from all unpleasantness by constant attention. In thinly populated districts like Bunyoro, where villages are few and far between, and large areas remain desolate jungle, each household has a considerable stretch of road to keep in order, which may be at some distance from the village. But in Teso each man's share is so small that there is no hardship involved even with many more miles to be kept up than is the case in other parts. It is quite possible to travel all about Teso without a tent, in a way that would be highly dangerous to health in Busoga, for instance, where all the camps soon become infested with the tick called *Ornithodoros moubata*, which conveys the infection of the very troublesome spirillum fever. These ticks do not appear to have as yet reached Teso, or else the constant precautions taken to protect the rest-camps from them have been successful, so that Europeans can safely sleep under a cool grass roof when travelling instead of enduring the heat of a tent.

As an administered portion of the Uganda Pro-

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

tectorate, Teso has but a short history. Its first experience of civilised ideas of government was brought by Semei Kakungulu, the able Muganda chief, who first reduced the district to order, cut the roads, and began to direct the local chiefs. The way in which he handled the country is a good illustration of the rare capacity of the Baganda for organisation and government, and also of their rapacity and overbearing tone toward all whom they consider beneath them. Order was indeed established, but rather after the method of making desolation and calling it peace ; Kakungulu and his dependents accumulated cattle in large numbers, and many seem to have regarded the country as a sort of Eldorado, to which resort might be had in times of failure or disgrace at home. Many of his men have been retained by the Government as agents, to instruct the local chiefs, in whose hands the executive power has been wisely kept. The agents are not permitted to try cases in the courts or carry out any works apart from the chiefs, but act as go-betweens, to interpret the instructions of the local Commissioners to those who are unaccustomed to European ways. Exceedingly good work has been done by many of these agents, who are not highly paid considering the multiplicity of departments which their supervision has to cover ; unfortunately a few have been unable to resist the temptation to get rich in a hurry, and have combined with unscrupulous chiefs to practise extortion on the peasants, who are too much afraid to make complaints to the British officials. The

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

last named make every effort to prevent abuses, but are generally thwarted by the impossibility of obtaining evidence. Some years have now passed since Kakungulu was transferred to Busoga, and now that there are resident Commissioners at Kumi the agents have poorer chances of fraudulent money-making, while at the same time greater familiarity gives courage to the peasants to make any complaint they have without fear, provided the Commissioner is one who understands well some native language.

The Teso people are as a whole of fine physique, though less well-nourished than the Gan'. Many of the men are very tall, but hemp-smoking has left its mark upon others, who are weedy and dull. Even the children used to smoke hemp all over the district, but lately a stop has been put to the growing of the plant, which is not now often to be seen, whereas when we first went to Teso, a patch was to be found in almost every village, fenced round to protect it from the goats. Absence of game deprives the young men of the athletic training given by constant hunting, and dances are only indulged in for purposes of medical treatment or on a few occasions in the dry season. One consequently does not get the same manly independent type as is common in Patiko. But every one who travels in the district is struck with the cheery, jolly manner of the Teso people, who are most friendly and obliging as a rule even to a stranger, exhibiting neither the servility of the poorer Bantus nor the impudent standoffishness





FINE FEATHERS MAKE FINE BIRDS.

Note the chip of the old block on the right of the picture.

(See p. 191.)



## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

sometimes found among the Gan'. The Munyoro, for instance, will kneel and go through an elaborate series of greetings, covering the whole range of the visitor's welfare and estate, to say nothing of his relatives and acquaintance. The Gan' will sometimes ignore entirely the advent of even a white man, or if desirous of being friendly and polite will salute, shake hands, and enquire, "How are you?" The average Teso man (*Etesot* to be correct) beams all over as if delighted to see a visitor, pours out a volley of *Yoga*, *yoga noi*; calls you *paperoka* ("my friend"), *papa* or *toto* ("father" or "mother"), and whether drunk or sober hovers round in a transport of effusive welcome. *Yoga* is a word of greeting, congratulation, or praise in turn, and has plenty of work to do, having to serve as a translation of many different expressions in English or Luganda.

Whether of choice or necessity the Teso are one of the most industrious tribes in Uganda, and do not seem to have the antipathy to work so largely developed as have some tribes, in the members of which one takes it for granted. They are also fairly clean in their habits, at least when in health. The recent introduction of the cotton-growing industry, as well as the increased attention paid to roads and rest-camps, tend to keep up the habit of employment, and indeed it is as difficult to catch the men in during the day in many Teso villages as it is in a city parish in England. The cultivation of the fields, the erection of houses for chiefs,

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

agents, or Europeans, and work on roads and bridges keep the male population constantly busy.

In the style of their house-building, personal habits, and some social usages, the Teso people are akin to the Gan' tribe. We find the same shape of hut, thatched with the thin grass in flounces as in Patiko, with the walls smeared with mud and cow-dung, a bare floor clean swept, and a low doorway. The members of both tribes sleep on the bare ground, or merely stretch out a dried skin for bedding; they allot the main work of cultivation to the men, make the staple crop the small millet, and have no marked objection to the society of their women-folk. The aim of each man is to make himself a position by marrying many wives and building a house for each; his bank consists of herds of cattle. But in other respects there are marked differences; the Teso do not build raised quarters for their young men, except where near the Lan'o tribe; they do but little in the decoration of their persons, and they employ the style of implements used by Bantu tribes. In religious observance, too, there is wide difference, as, for instance, in the methods of averting lightning.

The Teso language seems to be related to the Masai, Nandi, and Bari dialects, so far as can be judged from the work of others in those languages, that of Hollis in Masai, Mitterreutzner in Bari, and Sir H. Johnston in Nandi. The so-called Kumam dialect represents merely the fusion of Lan'o with Teso, a section of the Lan'o people

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

having quarrelled with their relations and fraternised with the neighbouring tribe. The affinity with Masai is seen in the plural forms of some nouns, and also in the irregularity with which the plurals are formed ; in the absence of a true passive voice, and the similarity of the forms employed to supply the deficiency ; and thirdly, in the use of genders, the letter *l* in each case being characteristic of the masculine and *n* of the feminine gender. This last feature is found also in Bari. The Karamojo people appear to speak a dialect almost identical with Teso, so far as can be judged without personal comparison of the two ; Turkana seems to be rather further off, though with many common words, such as *akim* (" fire "), and *akine* (" goat "), *asowat* (" iron "), and *erisa* (" leopard "), which are also common to Karamojo. The first five numerals are practically the same in all three languages, also the first personal pronoun.

Ateso is a language capable of numerous fine distinctions, much superior in this respect to the Gan'. Many nouns have two forms of the plural, one denoting a limited number of individuals, the other the entire class of objects or beings mentioned. So the plural of *etuan* is *itun'a*, which denotes " people," the secondary plural is *itun'asinei*, denoting " all mankind "; so also *akwapu*, " the ground," has the plural, *akwapin* meaning " a country," and *akwapisinei* " the whole world." Such forms are valuable in translation to help to convey the idea of the universality of the Christian religion. The Teso language possesses a full range

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of tenses ; it distinguishes between adjectival and relative forms, somewhat as English does by means of the definite and indefinite articles, the prefix *lo* often corresponding to our "a," while for "the," *loke* is employed. One distinction, which was not appreciated for many months, and yet at the same time is most important in some translations, is between the two Teso words for "we," "us." These are *syo* and *oni*; the former includes only the persons speaking, the latter includes all those spoken to. Suppose, for instance, two visitors wish to intimate their intention to take their leave, they must use *syo*, because the host is not expected to accompany them ; if, on the other hand, a couple of boys were to call for companions to go with them on some expedition, then *oni* would be correct in saying, "Let us go to such a place." The accurate observance of this distinction is evidently important in the framing of prayers to God, as the use of *oni* would associate the Almighty Himself with the imperfections and humble aspirations of His worshippers.

Difficulty has been experienced in deciding on the correct form of some words, owing to the introduction of many final vowels by members of Bantu tribes, unable to pronounce a syllable ending in a consonant. Large numbers of the Teso people are bi- or even tri-lingual, learning Luganda for the purpose of taking part in Government assemblies or communicating with the agents, and sometimes adding the Lan'o dialect, where that is on their borders. Bantu perversions of words con-

## Introductory—Non-Bantu Tribes

sequently become current, and the original form of the words is in danger of being lost.

It will be seen from what has been said that the Uganda Protectorate is a heterogeneous assemblage of tribes, united solely by political bonds not of their own making. Every stage of civilisation is represented, as well as many types of physical development and social economy. On the one hand we find the process of greeting a friend reduced to a fine art; on the other we see the simplicity of the Teso *Yoga*. In Patiko the marriage ceremony consists merely of paying over the necessary and inevitable cows; in the local vernacular paper of Buganda the account was recently given of the wedding in European style of the son of the Katikiro, or Prime Minister, a young man educated in England. In the races of Uganda we have represented the self-consciousness of half-assimilated civilisation, and the frank abandon of unconscious barbarity.

## CHAPTER III

### FIRST EXPERIENCES

"A brother hedged with alien speech,  
And lacking all interpreter."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

PROBABLY the best thing that can happen to a new missionary on his arrival in a country like Uganda, is to be at once deprived of the society of Europeans, except for occasional companionship and advice from seniors, and left to make friends with the natives by daily intercourse and association. Doubtless it seems hard to the novice, but it is in the highest degree important that he should derive his first impressions of language and thought direct from the people he is to try to win, and so avoid the European flavour which pervades language learned from books, and the foreign atmosphere that clings round ideas not assimilated at first hand. It is therefore with thankfulness that I now look back on what at the time seemed rather "hard lines" in my treatment on first arrival in Uganda. My location was to Toro, and there being no one else about to travel to that district, I was started off, after some five days only spent in Mengo, in the charge of a Muganda head-man and two or three boys, one of whom was supposed to know a little English. If he did know any, it

## First Experiences

was not the English which I spoke, and it was less intelligible to me than were my few words of Luganda to him. So I made the journey with a vocabulary and grammar in my pocket, and communicated with my caravan generally in bald terms, using the words naked and unadorned with any pretence at grammatical inflection, except for a few forms that I had learnt on the voyage out from England. My lack of knowledge probably stood me in good stead on the very first march from Mengo; arriving on my bicycle at a camping-place some ten miles out, I found a heated altercation in progress between my boys and head-man on the one side, and the porters on the other, as to where camp was to be pitched for the night. The porters had already got the tent half up, and were most reluctant to proceed; I, of course, could not join in the discussion, though understanding what the row was all about. In the end I cut the Gordian knot by just getting up and saying, *Tugende* ("Let us go"); whereupon the porters, seeing the hopelessness of arguing with a European who could not understand a word they said, packed up the tent again and sulkily marched on to the next camp. Under such circumstances one could hardly fail to make progress with the language, and by the time my lonely fortnight had expired, I felt quite at home with both boys and porters, though still dependent on my seniors for anything beyond the simplest communications.

At Kabarole, the capital of the Toro kingdom, I spent my first few months of missionary life,

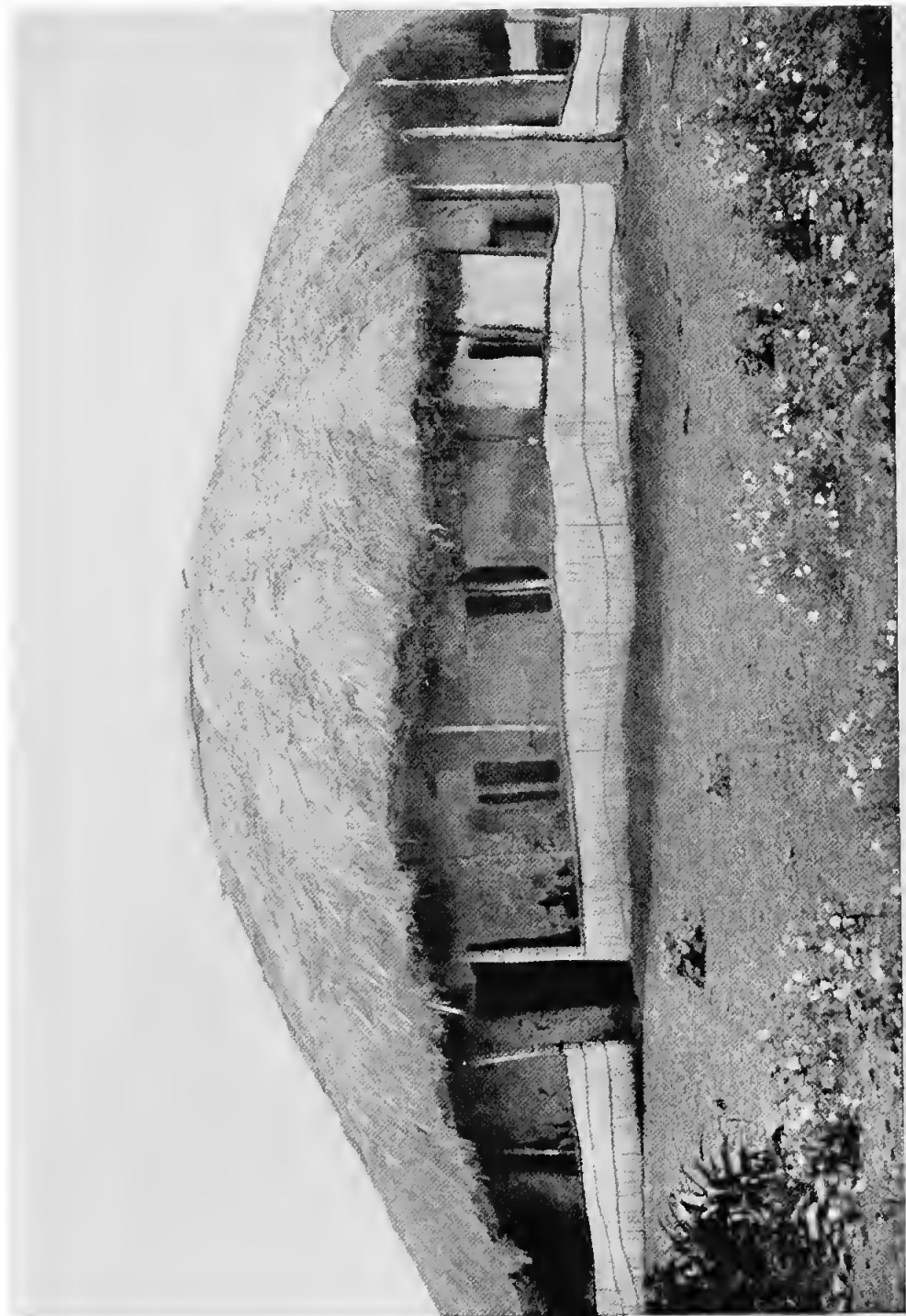
## On the Backwaters of the Nile

studying Lunyoro, helping to fit up a new bungalow that was nearing completion, and taking a small share in reading church services. During this time I paid a visit to Mboga, the westernmost county of Toro in those days, now part of the Congo State, and so gained my first insight into the working of an out-station. Having "found my feet," and preached my first sermon in Lunyoro, I was ready to take over the work at Butiti, which had not had a resident European missionary for some years, and was to all intents and purposes a new station. Here I lived from the beginning of 1902 until the middle of 1904, and my first work was to build a mud and wattle house in place of the shanty of reeds which occupied the hill-top and was tottering to its fall. No sooner was the house finished than a flash of lightning made short work of my first attempt at African building. The place was really barely completed, and men were still at work white-washing, when a rainless storm swept by and left ruin in its track. All my goods were rescued; for myself I was away for a day or two in Kabarole, and returned to find black smoking heaps of mud and ashes in the place of my comfortable abode. I received one or two letters of consolation in English (?) from native friends, that from the native Muganda clergyman, Apolo Kivebulaya, being hardly as admirable in execution as in intent. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR MR. KITCHING,—Good morning? I want to write to you a letter in english. But







OLD MUD AND WATTLE CHURCH AT BUTITI, MWENGE.

## First Experiences

Josherni he to tell you meny wads you house destroy, I am forgive you. But house you troubled seen when troble fo house. Good by. sincerly APOLLO KIVE."

"Josherni" is meant to indicate the late Rev. T. B. Johnson; "meny wads" many words; "forgive" instead of "pity" is due to the fact that one word in Lunyoro has both these meanings.

Another letter, written apparently by an amanuensis, as the signature is in different handwriting, runs thus:—

"DEAR MR. KITCHING,—I writing for you these kind letter and I began in a little words, becouse I have not to know to write the letters of in English. My dear we have heard as your hous it is destreyed. And we are very sory very much. And here I began to geet you, good morning how do you do? I geet you very much my dear I have not many the words and must you to correct all the mistakes I remain yours sincerly JOHN KOFIA."

Having thus speedily lost my first house, my next essay was on a smaller scale, as I had also to face the task of getting a church erected. This involved a vast deal of pushing and exhorting in order to procure the requisite labour, to say nothing of the manual work rendered unavoidable owing to the total absence of skilled workmen. House and church were finished about the same time, and lightning once more nearly destroyed our handiwork, the church this time being the building

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

struck. The flash fell on to the centre of the roof, split one of the main supporting poles, ran down the rafters, and earthed itself by way of one of the verandah poles, which was reduced to matchwood. The people were only just leaving the place after morning service (once again I happened to be absent) and were able to extinguish the flames with some native beer. Altogether we felt that we had had our share of lightning, and storms were all too frequent during the time I lived in Butiti. The terrific wind often caused scarcity of food by wrecking the banana gardens, many of the plants being also struck by lightning, and the stems reduced to a pulp as if boiled. On one occasion four flashes fell on banana plants during one storm in a distance of some four hundred yards. One of the Roman Catholic fathers had a narrow escape in a place not far from Butiti; he was holding service in his little mud church, when a flash ran down the pole near which he was seated, and stunned him as well as most of the congregation. When I saw him some days later he was still very deaf as a result.

The perpetual building work is one of life's little worries out in Uganda, the incapacity of the workmen being a constant source of annoyance, and exceeded only by their laziness. One gang of men engaged in building a church in Kabarole were instructed by the missionary to deepen the hole for one of the poles and then put the pole in place. Two hours afterwards the entire gang were discovered seated round the

## First Experiences

pole, each with a hand upon it lest it should fall over and crush them, waiting quite content until some one came to see whether the hole was now deep enough. And there they would no doubt have sat for the rest of the day, if they had not been noticed and instructed how to proceed. To the ever-present difficulty of the labourers must be added lack of tools and tackle, instability of materials, and, by no means least, the ignorance of the amateur architect, so that it is not surprising if houses and churches do not always last very long.

During my stay at Butiti, I spent several short periods at Kabarole, partly for the purpose of helping in the building work on houses and hospital. These visits afforded an opportunity of seeing some medical and surgical work, and the details picked up proved valuable at other stations where no doctor was within reach. In leisure time closer acquaintance could be made with King Kasagama and his chiefs, and sometimes help given to them in repairing clocks and in other ways. The King once called me up to help him dispose of some things he had bought off a Government official; there was a hanging lamp, which he had no idea how to put up, and a quantity of ticking for sun-blinds, which I suggested might do for door curtains.

At other times I was occupied in travelling round my own district of Mwenge, including the part known as Butuku, a land of alternate excesses of rain and sun, so that crops either rotted in the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

ground or withered up. On one of these journeys I first made acquaintance with the local form of "German" itinerant band; this consisted of a party of men armed with instruments in the shape of tubes, some eight inches in length and one in diameter. These tubes were bound round with some kind of string, and blown at the end, in the way a boy blows into a key. The bottom end was stopped with the finger, and the resultant noise was a shrill squeak, the only tune being produced by the alternation of different notes by different performers, like a peal of bells.

My most interesting journey was a trip up to the foot of the Ruwenzori glacier, undertaken in company with the Rev. A. B. and Mrs. Fisher, in the month of January, one of the dry months of the year. Starting on the 19th, it was not until the 24th that we began the real ascent of the mountain, when we exchanged our lowland porters for Bakonjo, and reduced our luggage to the lowest possible limits. The early part of the ascent took us through forest belts, and over bracken-clad steeps that might have been in Hampshire; we constantly crossed and recrossed the River Mubuku on rocks and stepping-stones, and for the first day had no particular difficulties. At our first camp, under an overhanging rock, we had a dry, cool spot, where, however, water was an hour's walk distant, and the tent ropes had to be fastened to rocks and roots owing to the impossibility of driving pegs. Our one pailful of water was eked out by cupfuls for soup, tea, and toilet purposes,

## First Experiences

and it is wonderful how good a wash you can manage with a teacupful of water if only you are careful.

On the following day we got among the bamboos, then traversed a valley paved mostly with mud, where we picked a few coarse, rather tasteless blackberries. The valley terminated in a wall of rock, up which we scrambled on hands and knees, aided by a rough rope-ladder left there by Sir H. Johnston. It was wonderful how the porters managed to walk up this incline, laden as they were, with the sole assistance of a bamboo for alpenstock. At the top of this cliff we had an hour of steep hillside, keeping for the most part to the bed of a stream. We clambered upward over slippery moss, clinging to roots, sliding and gliding, to and fro across the swooping rivulet, that had here and there hollowed out basins like hip-baths, to tempt the panting traveller. But deadly chill lurked in the glacier water, and we climbed on to a camp on a tiny level patch of mossy rock, where we were detained all the next day by rain. We sat in the tent, the porters in neighbouring caves; some went and hunted in the rain to replenish their larders with the little conies, called *njoga*, which are very numerous, and can be heard squealing at night on all sides. Our next day took us for a long time over nothing but roots and fallen trunks of the giant heather; there appeared to be little or no soil, only the dense brown, orange, and grey coloured mosses, and the rotted stems of long ago, filling in the interstices between the stones.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

After an hour or more of scrambling over the trunks and rocks, and a sloppy tramp along a sodden valley, a sharp ascent brought us to our last camp, within view of the foot of the glacier which was our objective. There was only room to put up one tent, but plenty of dry rock for the natives to sleep on, and unlimited firewood. A lovely, clear day saw us to the snow-line, where we stood on the ice at the source of the Mubuku, which we had so often crossed, here but a tiny trickle creeping out of a cave in the soil-blackened glacier. From the edges of the black, blue, and white ice dripped water and pellets of ice and pebbles, as the warm sun set free what the frost had imprisoned thousands of feet above us. Cameras were unlimbered and we took it in turns to stand on the glacier while indubitable evidence was secured by the lenses that we had really attained the object of our ambition, and reached the snow-line on the Mountains of the Moon. Then, as our time was very limited, we retraced our steps, struck camp, and covered a portion of the return journey on the same day. At our base camp we dismissed and paid off our Bakonjo porters with lengths of calico ; they were hardy, happy fellows, with few possessions and consequently few cares, with well-developed muscles and a wholesome objection to clothes. So in two days we passed from 35° to 115°, and reached Kabarole again with no worse mishap than the dropping into the Mubuku of a bag of blankets, which were soon dried again in the blazing sun of the afternoon.







LOADING UP THE FERRY-BOAT AT PAJAO.

(See p 48.)

## First Experiences

Only four months after this mountain trip came orders to proceed to new work in the Nile Province among the Gan' people ; Mr. A. B. Lloyd had just gone to open up a station at Patiko in the midst of this tribe, and I was to join him as soon as ever I could, as in the meantime he was all by himself, in a new country, after an attack of dysentery, camped in a rough grass shed. Within a week from the time of receiving my marching orders, I was on the road. The first stage of my journey was Hoima, the capital of Bunyoro, where I had to pick up a lot of loads for Mr. Lloyd, and also his huge herd of cattle. As I had a good number of cows of my own and all my belongings as well, this meant a very lengthy caravan and slow travelling. A week through rather uninteresting country for the most part, including the stretch of thorn-trees and sand inhabited by the Copi tribe, brought us to Pajao, where the road crosses the Victoria Nile. Just before you descend to the river there is a magnificent view from the top of the last hill. On either hand deep wooded gorges and cliffs run down to the Nile, the broad, strong stream pouring down to take life to the historic plains of Egypt flecked with masses of foam from the Murchison Falls just above, and dotted with grim snouts of crocodiles and small dug-outs, from which men are fishing with rod and line. At the foot of the hill a short, flat stretch affords space for a village of Copi and Banyoro, who sell food to passers-by and ferry caravans across the river in large canoes. From the village a guide may be obtained who

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

will conduct the visitor by a winding path along the river bank, over rocks and under bushes, past a sandy spit, where huge crocodiles lie and bask till scared by the approach of man, past huts where fishermen squat with their spoils laid out in the sun to dry, to a promontory of rock from the end of which can be obtained a splendid view of the falls. The river pours boiling through a chasm in the cliffs, only eighteen feet wide, and tumbles in a wild confusion of tortured waters over the rocks, to spread itself out in swirling, eddying, foam-covered reaches, which swarm with hippo and crocodiles.

Here at Pajao the real troubles of our journey were met. Across the one-hundred-yard expanse of cross currents we had to ferry all the loads and porters; this was simple enough, if tedious, and the calves gave little trouble, as they could be taken in the boats. The toil began when we tackled the full-grown cattle, about one hundred in number; the beasts had to be swum alongside the dug-outs, held up with ropes by men in the canoes. The first job was to catch and tie the frightened animals, and some of them raced over the hillsides like wild buffaloes. Then the captives had to be got down to the canoe and made fast, whereupon they became like so many sheet anchors, and a prodigious amount of pushing and tail twisting was required to get the boat off. The danger from the crocodiles was the next thing to be thought of, as the brutes soon became aware of what was going on, and dropped off the rocks up-stream one by one to see what they could

## First Experiences

pick up. As soon as each boat-load had started I retired to a convenient rock that overlooked the ferry and kept the hungry brutes at bay with my rifle ; a Muganda trader had had one of his beasts seized the day before, and found it minus a leg when it arrived on the other side, so we were very glad when the whole 120 arrived safely on the northern bank. It took us from 6 a.m. till 2 p.m. to get all across, and I have never done a more exhausting day's work in my life.

We had now left Bantu tribes behind, and found ourselves in quite a different country. After three days of thorn-scrub and loose sand, with very little sign of inhabitants and consequently but scanty food supplies, we entered upon a stretch of rolling plains, thinly covered with scrub and trees, and inhabited, not too thickly, by a pure Nilotic race. Here was the country where Sir S. Baker spent so many months before his final journey southward to discover the Albert Lake. Close to the station to which I was going were the remains of his old fortifications, made of loose stonework, now quite buried in long grass. Some of the old chiefs could recollect his coming, while one cherished photographs of the explorer and his wife, sent to him by Lady Baker. The superiority of the people in physique to the Bantu tribes was at once noticeable, as well as their independent manner and bold, not to say aggressive, demeanour. In Mwenge I had been accustomed to servility, total lack of initiative and ambition, to a people neither keen nor vigorous. The favourite cry when

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

food was requested to feed one's caravan was, "Have we any food? Is not hunger killing us?" which looked true enough sometimes if one judged by the physique of the complainant. But what did not appear to the casual observer was that it was entirely their own fault, as each householder seemed to think that his mission in life was to sit still and smoke while his wife cultivated a meagre patch of potatoes just sufficient to keep body and soul together. This state of things drew an amusing letter from one traveller through Bunyoro, but I do not remember who it was. He wrote to *The Times* to protest against the scandalous neglect of the country by the Europeans! Wherever he went he was told that the people were dying of hunger, and yet nothing was done! There sat the missionaries, and there were the callous officials, none lifting a finger to stay the progress of the terrible famine which stalked through the land, decimating the unfortunate inhabitants, who were too weak to assist the passing traveller, &c.

When we reached the Nilotics all was changed. Women pressed forward with gourds of flour, eager for the salt, beads, or other barter goods brought by our porters. Men hurried up to find out what was to be had in exchange for their produce, and then returned to their villages to fetch what was most in demand. All round the camp rose shouts of laughter at mutual struggles with unfamiliar dialects, and bargains were struck somehow by means of the invariable understanding that seems

## First Experiences

to exist between all black men, even when neither knows a word of the other's language. The European came in for much curious notice and hearty salutation, the favourite form of greeting being to extend a grimy paw to be shaken in European fashion. There was a total absence of the evident sense of inferiority so characteristic of the Banyoro; each man came up as if fully convinced that he was quite as good as you, if not a little better; as to the "*luloka*," or "people of the other side" of the Nile, as they styled the Bantu porters, they were a class of beings altogether inferior in every particular.

At the village of a big chief named Okelo I found Mr. Lloyd awaiting my arrival, and we proceeded in company to the site already chosen for the mission station, in the district known as Patiko, ruled by a chief named Obona, who owned a sort of semi-allegiance to an overlord named Awic. We soon found that the authority of the chiefs was in many cases but nominal, and that of the British Government secretly scoffed at. Little attempt was made to really administer the district, which was later abandoned to its own devices. Captain (now Colonel) Delmé Radcliffe was held much in honour and often mentioned. He had made a circuit of the country with a view to pacification and administration, and his prowess as a soldier and as a hunter was a favourite theme with many of the Gan' braves. His native nickname was *Lan'alan'a*, or the Active Traveller.

On Mount Keyu, a big hill near Chief Obona's

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

village, I spent the last two years of my first term out in Uganda. Our first care was to get a house built to take the place of the rough grass shed which received us on our arrival at the station. In this work we received some help gratis from the young men and girls of the nearest villages, gratis being understood to mean "Give us a feast at the end of the job." My companion was chief architect, contractor, and foreman of the works, while I spent most of my time on the language, which was quite different from the Bantu dialects I had hitherto used. My assistant in this work was a Madi boy, baptized in Masindi by the name of Sira, who was familiar with the intermediate Copi dialect, and soon learnt the local idioms. We used Lunyoro as the medium of communication, and we also had some valuable help from one or two Banyoro who had been carried off years before from their own country and learnt the Gan' dialect thoroughly. As soon as we really got to work and began to gather a few boys and young men to learn to read and write, we were able to correct many mistakes both in idiom and spelling by means of the criticism of the readers. The Gan' language being simple, we soon had a reading sheet in use, and a few hymns and collects; a gospel was ready for the press in tentative form within a year of our arrival. Later the translation of the four Gospels was completed and a short grammar and vocabulary of the dialect.

The study of the language brought one into close contact with many of the people, with whom also







METHOD OF BLOWING THE GAN' WHISTLE, MADE OF THE HORN OF A GOAT  
OR ANTELOPE.

(See p. 109.)

## First Experiences

we came in touch by means of hunting expeditions, lantern displays, and the use of a phonograph. This last was of course greatly in request, and often the plea was advanced that some one had brought his relatives from a distance to hear the "man singing in a box," and they could not be allowed to go away disappointed or they would accuse of lying those who had told them such a thing was possible. Magic-lantern pictures of anything except their own country or familiar animals like elephants, we found made little impression on those who had had no instruction ; and even those to some extent educated would make such a remark as " Did you ever meet Jesus in England before you came to our country? " *à propos* of a picture of Christ stilling the storm.

## CHAPTER IV

### PASTURES NEW

“The lore of men that ha’ dwelt with men  
In the new and naked lands.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

IN 1907 I returned to Uganda after furlough, and was at first located to resume my old work among the Gan’ people. My wife and I joined Mr. Lloyd and his wife at Patiko station at the end of July in that year, but we had only a few months there. No sooner had we begun to gather round us a few chiefs’ sons as the nucleus of a boarding school than circumstances necessitated the abandonment of the station and our removal to entirely new work. Our departure was a sad one. The Gan’ people had always told us that we should not remain in the district; all the Europeans they had known had left after a few months in the country, and they could not believe in our intention to remain among them indefinitely. Now they considered that they were proved to have been right, and doubtless thought in their hearts that we had deceived them in our protestations, and had never meant to stay with them. And at our final departure but few took the trouble to see us off or even bid us farewell,

## Pastures New

while several thefts took place in the last few weeks.

Our new district lay some two hundred miles to the south-east of us, but in order to reach it we had to travel half round the Protectorate, owing to the unsettled nature of the country on the direct route and the absence of roads through the Miro district. So we retraced our steps through Busindi and thence on to Mengo. The road by way of Pajao had by this time acquired an evil reputation owing to the great numbers of tsetse flies at the Nile ferry. When we first went to Patiko in 1904 we lost a large number of cattle from *nagana*, though at the time we were quite at a loss to understand the cause of the mortality. And recently the entire district along the Nile has been made a prohibited area under the Sleeping-sickness Ordinance, and no traffic is permitted along the Pajao road. In order to avoid the fly, therefore, we took a more easterly route from Patiko, and crossed the Nile at a place called Podi, about half-way between Pajao and Poweira. This took us through a corner of the Miro district which was supposed to be unruly and even dangerous. We found the people very curious but quite friendly; but after we reached Masindi a report was brought in that a European caravan had been cut up on the road behind us. As Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd were the only other white people travelling at the time over that part, we were somewhat anxious until they turned up quite safe and sound with all their belongings. The rumour of disaster could only be accounted for by

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the fact that a bullock and cow belonging to the cow-herd in charge of Mr. Lloyd's cattle had been stolen on the way and could not be recovered.

Our route from Mengo to Mount Elgon which was our immediate objective, took us through Busoga, just then at the very height of its troubles. Sleeping-sickness was rife, and famine, due to eighteen months' drought, was severe in the southern half of the province. We were obliged to carry with us loads of flour for our porters, as food was practically unobtainable all along the road, and was scarce among the Bagisu round Mount Elgon. At Iganga, a mission station some twenty-three miles from Jinja, we found the missionaries spending most of their time in famine relief, much of the usual work of the mission having been suspended. From this place we went to visit one of the sleeping-sickness camps, at a place called Buso, some two miles away. The horrors of the disease had been aggravated by the famine; in spite of all efforts on the part of the doctor in charge, food was almost impossible except in small quantities, and with five hundred patients in the camp large supplies were needed to give each even a little. Deaths at the time were running up to seventy or even ninety in a month; as we passed from ward to ward we saw the corpse of a man who had just died lying in the courtyard awaiting the doctor's orders for burial. In every direction sat groups of hopeless sufferers, in different stages of the disease and various degrees of starvation, mere skeletons many of them, hardly able to crawl about. As if disease and famine were

## Pastures New

not enough, a plague of fleas and jiggers had defied all the efforts to exterminate them, and the feet of many patients, especially the children, were in a horrible condition of ulceration. Some of the less afflicted patients, still in early stages of the disease, were engaged in the unpleasant duty of removing the jiggers and dressing the feet of those too weak to do it for themselves. These comparatively strong ones lived in huts by themselves, only the more advanced cases being taken into the wards. Fresh cases were constantly being brought in ; one man apparently died in the hammock on the way to the camp, and his bearers had commenced to bury him on the roadside, but he sat up in the grave and was brought on. When we saw him he was able to walk about, better food having no doubt done much to temporarily restore him.

One of the saddest sights was the house set apart for the reception of patients in whom the disease induced mania ; there is great fear with such cases that they may set fire to the camp, either deliberately or by accident, during the night, so they are made to sleep in a place entirely without windows, and which can be securely locked up during the hours of darkness. One such house into which I went at another camp, in Buganda, was occupied by perhaps fifteen such unfortunates ; as they were mostly in the advanced stages of sleeping-sickness, they probably suffered little, if at all, being unconscious practically all the time.

At Buso the missionaries were doing what they could to teach such of the patients as were capable

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

still of understanding what was said to them, and services were held regularly in the camp. On the occasion of our visit Mrs. Skeens took with her a few nuts for the little ones, and eagerly did the poor half-starved mites devour them. One poor little one, desperately emaciated, was found crying and moaning because the ulcered condition of his feet prevented him from coming with the others; he was pacified with a promise of some next time. The doctor's wife was kept busy each morning feeding the tiniest children with milk, which, fortunately, was not so scarce as solid food. Of course, in other camps where food is plentiful the condition of things is much better and the mortality far less.

Some four days' marching from Iganga brought us to Nabumale, the mission station among the Bagisu people, where we made our temporary abode, until a site could be selected for a station in Teso. Here my wife enjoyed the hospitality of the lady missionaries, the Misses Pilgrim and Morris, while I went with Archdeacon Buckley to explore in the new district. We first went to Kumi, where a Government station has since been built, and then proceeded eleven miles westward to N'ora, where we soon settled on the present site of our station as the best that could be got in a district where high land and water supply were neither of them too plentiful. The place is as nearly as possible in the centre of the Teso tribe, and situated where the population is thickest, in a district where the number of inhabitants per square mile of area is







SLEEPING-SICKNESS PATIENTS GATHERED AFTER SERVICE IN THE CHURCH.

The disease is now dying out in Uganda for want of victims.

(See p. 56.)

## Pastures New

probably larger than anywhere in the Protectorate, except among the Bagisu.

For some weeks my wife and I occupied a rough house inside the stockade wherein lived the Muganda agent and his dependents. It was hot and stuffy during the day, and a paradise for mosquitoes at night, as we had neither doors nor windows, and occasionally had to go to bed before we wanted to in order to attain the security of our nets. While here we had visitors on two occasions, and having no spare room, of course, were in difficulties for sleeping accommodation. One visitor, an unexpected arrival on a bicycle, without any porters, had to be content with a deck chair and a rug, with a spare net erected over him to give some meagre protection from the thirsty hordes of mosquitoes. Our other visitor was Mr. Roscoe, who, having full camp equipment, was able to put up in the rest house close by. But as it happened he was worse off in some respects than the man in the deck chair. The prevalence of famine in Busoga had sent over the border into Teso a great many undesirables, to pick up a living as best they could. As every Musoga is a born thief, their best consisted chiefly in burglary, at which they are experts, the Indian shops affording a very easy prey and a booty easily disposed of to "the man in the street." Some, however, flew at higher game, and a European unguarded by sentries provided an opportunity not to be missed. Mr. Roscoe had gone to bed in one room of the *mugini*, or rest house, his boys slept at the other end. About ten o'clock, when

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

he had but just extinguished his light, Mr. Roscoe heard a noise as if some stray dog were trying to push past the canvas screen which had been hung over the entrance in lieu of a door. He made noises to drive it away, but without success, so he called to the boys at the other end of the house. But the boys were tired after a very long march and refused to waken up, so Mr. Roscoe leant out of his mosquito net to strike a light. No sooner did the match fizz and gleam than there was a violent commotion, and a black clothes-box that stood by the bed was whirled out through the doorway into the blackness of the night. It was a Musoga thief who did not even wait until his victim was asleep before daring to make his all too successful attempt. His audacity was rewarded with some suits of clothes and private papers, the latter being found next day in the box, thrown into a swamp. The thief was never caught, but when a notorious highwayman was condemned and hung some time later, some of the clothing was traced to him. We have not ourselves been troubled since by burglars, though the Indians constantly complain that the walls or floors of their rude shops are dug through and goods carried off.

Meanwhile I had been engaged in getting built, as fast as the dilatoriness of native workmen would permit, a mud dwelling on the site chosen for our station. This house we occupied for some eighteen months, while a permanent one was in building, and the usual difficulties were experienced in getting the work completed, owing to the lack of skilled

## Pastures New

assistance, the many widely differing occupations between which time had to be divided, to say nothing of the limitations of my own knowledge on such points as the correct way to fix sheets of corrugated iron roofing or the accepted method of "bonding" courses of bricks. In the matter of bricklaying my education at home had been sadly neglected, but I had served a rough apprenticeship laying fireplaces and chimneys in four different houses in Toro. When I came to the more elaborate scheming necessary in correctly spacing out windows, and the accurate fitting required in laying an arch, I found that my rough-and-ready methods were not conducive to stability or style.

The multifarious duties expected of the pioneer are at once the charm and the worry of the life. Nothing can come amiss ; if you do not know how to do a job, you must start to do it and find out how as you go on. No work is valueless, however much it may seem waste of time, that serves to bring one in touch with those the missionary has come to reach. At the same time it is very trying when in the midst of some specially difficult passage of translation, or of a peculiarly interesting bit of grammatical research, to be called off constantly on errands that could easily wait or need never have been brought to the white man at all. In Patiko many of the interruptions were applications to have disputes settled, and in one morning I was called upon to adjudicate in the following cases :—

1. A porter caught stealing rupees, or at least accused of doing so.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

2. If workmen refuse to do what they are told may the chief in charge use *kiboko* (whip of hippo hide) on them?

3. Swahili head-man employed on Government station has, in the absence of the official in charge, hit a man over the head. Surgical treatment.

4. The same gentleman refuses to pay a long-due debt. His fez taken as security.

5. The Government carpenter in a drunken fit has hit a woman on the arm and broken it. Arm set, carpenter sent to the nearest official in charge of a policeman.

6. A policeman maltreated a man and stole his knife. Particulars taken for the information of the Collector on his next visit.

Interspersed amid these magisterial cases were other interruptions; a teacher comes to say his wages are due; somebody wants a hymn-sheet; a little boy wants to kill caterpillars for us (we had a plague at the time destroying the potato vines), his wages to be paid in a strip of coloured flannel. At another time it will be a messenger from the local chief with an old hurricane lamp; it leaks, so will you please solder it up. Or it may be a clock or watch in some more or less advanced stage of decrepitude, which the white man is supposed to be able to cure almost with a touch. Sometimes a kettle is the disabled utensil, the spout having parted company with the body, or a chair which requires a new leg or a fresh piece of canvas in the seat. Your timber sawyers will come and say that they have finished the cut

## Pastures New

marked out for them, and want the log turned or newly lined. The drum-maker arrives and has to be set to work on the burst-in drum, and a skin found that will make a new head. A gang of men turn up laden with grass for the thatching of the new school hall, and want to know where it is to be dumped down. A chief wants to see you very privately; he produces a handkerchief full of rupees and begs you by the love you bear him to send them to Europe and buy him a really strong bicycle, not one like they sell in the bazaar. Your next visitor may be a stranger to you, and you find he is a petty chief from a distance who has brought in a number of his wives to see the white baby or to hear the phonograph. Your own household *ménage* will provide possible trouble, and a boy may come to say that the oven has gone wrong and the dinner can't be cooked, that the water-carrier has been neglecting his duties and there is no water to boil the potatoes, or that the white ants are devouring the boxes in the storeroom, or the rats the flour-bag. One may have to leave a long-expected and belated mail, full of interesting news, and go out to pay off the men, boys, and girls who have been carrying the bricks up from the sheds, and have to receive various petty amounts which take much counting of cents, with the added annoyance that some fail to answer to their names after the cents have been carefully totted up. A fire down in the huts occupied by the workmen may take you off from your dinner to superintend the pulling down of some huts in

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

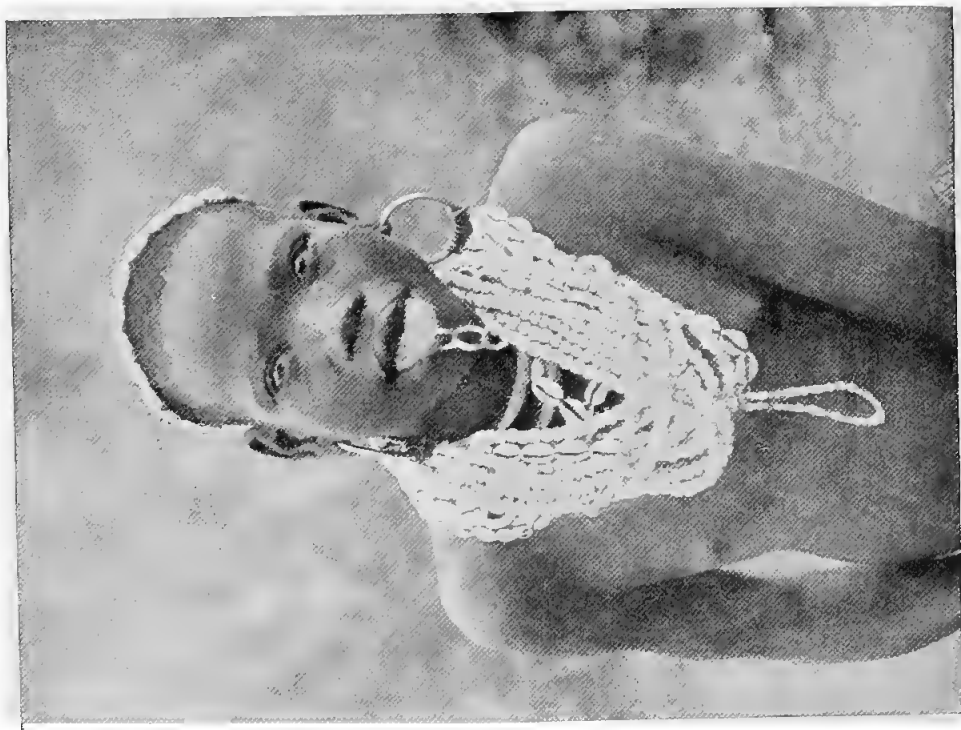
order to save the remainder of the station ; or you get up from breakfast to go and shoot the bullock required for prizes at the sports or the Christmas dinner, because it is too wild to be slaughtered by the knife.

Even the services in church are not exempt from interruption. I had to break off one Sunday afternoon in the middle of my sermon to investigate the cause of a sudden lapse in the attention of my audience. As all eyes were turned upwards, I looked above my head and found a small snake hanging from the thatch close to me ; I borrowed a stick, exterminated the reptile, and then completed my discourse without further mishap. On another occasion I did not even get so far as beginning my sermon, as a man was brought in just at service-time badly mauled by a leopard. It had entered his house to steal a fowl, and the owner pluckily tackled the thief, seizing him by the jaw. This the leopard resented to the extent of taking away with him the top joint of a thumb, besides leaving as mementoes several large claw wounds on the man's head. So, instead of preaching, I had to exercise the other apostolic function of healing. At other times it may be a snake bite that requires immediate attention, or a person stung by a scorpion, pests which are numerous in Teso.

Such are some of the manifold interruptions which disturb the routine of work, and often rob that routine of time which is due to its adequate accomplishment. The daily round of classes, language study, dispensary, school supervision, ques-







A TESO GIRL.

Note the brass rings hanging from the tongue.  
(See p. 196.)



A TESO MAN WITH SHELL HEAD-DRESS.

(See p. 194.)

## Pastures New

tioning of candidates for the catechumenate or for baptism, interviewing teachers from out-stations and hearing their reports and difficulties, afford ample employment even for two or three men, apart from the extraneous items; and then the important work of itineration is left out of the count, a work which in some districts occupies almost the entire time of the missionary.

Although my wife and myself were the first Europeans to settle in the Teso country, Christian work had been carried on in the district for some years by a Muganda clergyman, by name Andereya Batulabude. Being an unusually good linguist for a Muganda, he had acquired a fair knowledge of the Teso dialect, and by his aid and that of a boy whom he had taught and baptized, I was able to make much quicker progress than would have been otherwise possible in the work of translation. Many traps were pointed out, which must have inevitably caught the feet of the European novice, and flung him into the ditch of absurdity or the slough of incomprehensibility.

There are now in the Teso language two gospels, some twenty hymns, and a simple service-book, as well as a few other items of elementary literature, but much remains to be done before the structure of the verbs is elucidated, and the grammar of the language mapped out in a coherent system.

The boys' boarding school at N'ora station now numbers some sixty members, and some of these have been recently baptized. The cultivation of cotton and rubber is carried on by the pupils, partly

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

for the sake of the instruction in methods of profitable agriculture, partly for the support of the school, the purchase of cloth and soap, and so forth. The boys also grow their own food, in the shape of millet, sweet potatoes, and other crops.

The dispensary work has made large demands upon our time, the attendance daily ranging from fifty up to one hundred. There is urgent need of a proper medical mission, with sufficient staff to maintain a lazaretto, as leprosy is common in the Teso district.

Elementary teaching work has been done at some fifteen to twenty out-stations by Baganda volunteers, who, for a miserable pittance, spend a various number of years in what is to them a foreign country, inhabited by a people of uncleanly habits, speaking a language of a type peculiarly difficult for them to acquire. Adequate supervision of their work has been found impossible owing to lack of time.

The position in the Teso country is typical of that in many districts, where there exist unbounded opportunities for elevating the native in the best sense, if only the requisite staff were available. May some who read these pages feel called to take some share in this greatest and highest of all empire-building !

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE ROAD

“And we go, go, go away from here !  
On the other side the world we're overdue !  
'Send the road is clear before you, when the old spring fret  
comes o'er you,  
And the red gods call for you !”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

IF any one can be trusted to catch the dominant note in the tune of the times, it is the advertisement artist. A recent poster issued by the Uganda Railway suggested the allurements of Uganda scenery as a cure for the *ennui* of the *blasé* tourist, and doubtless in these days when no one is surprised, and when so little of the world remains unexplored, such mild sensations as are afforded by a trip in the train through the East African Zoo or a climb to perpetual snows on the equator are not to be despised. But the real fascination of African travel remains a sealed book to the traveller who has but a few weeks in the country, who must follow the regular routes, must keep in touch with mails and time-tables and depend on interpreters for his intercourse with those he meets. Only the resident can taste the joys of strolling about a district, mixing with the “essential kaffir” in his own

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

haunts, at his ease with a white man whose conversation he can understand, whom he has seen before and hopes to see again. And the true delights are experienced not so much on the march as in camp. What a flood of memories comes over the mind as one recollects the many places where tents were pitched and fires built, while local friends crowded round to greet their visitors, to hear and tell the news! How each camp associates itself in the mind with some trivial incident or with some adventure that might be thrilling if it were more unusual.

Sometimes a march stands out as notable for its weary length, its discomfort, or its "dance of myriad circumstance." I hope never to repeat the experiences of the day when after struggling through deep mud for an hour we got lost in a strip of forest where the path mazed itself in a wilderness of noisome hippo "runs," in one of which I sat wearily waiting on a box while the headman and porters of the caravan searched for the way out; when after extricating ourselves from this we had to wade a river and then climb a steep escarpment in torrents of rain which quickly soaked all that the river had left dry.

But for reminiscences of *safari* I rather turn up memory's files under the heading Camp, and find there first of all scenes and landscapes that live by the splendour of their colouring or the insistence of their striking outlines. What more haunting than the myriad-peopled solitude of Toro forest as you enter it at dawn through a curtain of fantastic

## On the Road

mist which has wrapped your camp all night in its chill embrace! Its teeming denizens are just rousing themselves for the business of another day; the colobus monkeys are shaking themselves out of sleep preparatory to climbing to some high branch where the sun may dry the dew from their black coats and white-tipped tails. The chimpanzee is grumbling to himself and breaks into an angry chatter as you snap a twig in the path. Countless birds of every hue scream or chatter or sing their "grace" before setting out to find their breakfast. Then as the sun gets up come the butterflies, in liveries of green and black, scarlet, blue, or brown, some glistening with all the elusive tints of mother-of-pearl. The ants have been busy all night, and daylight makes no difference to them, except that you may see a regular army of big black fellows setting out in column of fours to raid the nearest termites' nest. Finally comes man, and the arrival of an early traveller destroys the solitude and recalls you to the fact that the sun is getting hot for marching.

A camp down in Butuku at the south end of the Albert Nyanza is memorable to me for the play of changing lights at sunset. All day gorgeous birds, like blackbirds glorified with peacock-blue sheen, like flashes of fire or darting rainbows, had flitted past my tent. They were succeeded by myriads of fire-flies as the sun set, the whole plain twinkling with a terrestrial "night of stars." Still more gorgeous was the sunset one night at a place where I camped in Patiko at the village of a boy chief

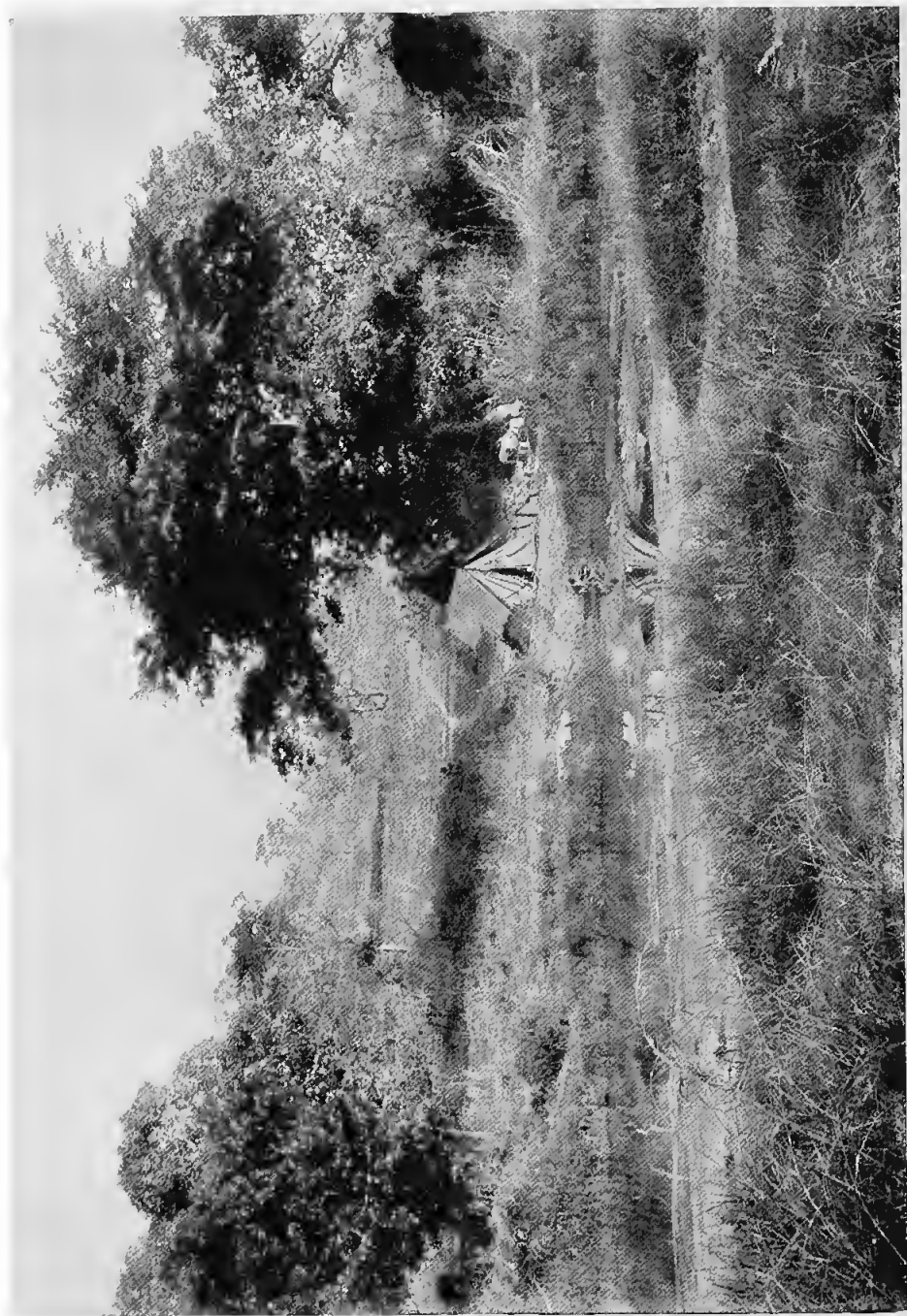
## On the Backwaters of the Nile

named Oryan'. The sun went down at the edge of a plain covered with borassus palms, whose fan-like leaves were silhouetted in black upon the kaleidoscopic tints of the sky. Then came a shower of rain, which threw a veil of coloured mist over all, and flung a great double rainbow like an arch right across the heavens overhead.

More frequently the associations of a camp are connected with the animals, wild or otherwise, which one sees or hears. One camp in the middle of a village near the Nile in the district of Bura I remember by the visit of a hyæna, which ran through the place in the early morning after a soaking wet night, not howling after the manner of the tribe but roaring almost like a lion. The roaring of the lions by way of orchestral accompaniment to dinner and breakfast, takes me back to a camp on the River Atepi, east of Nimule, where in a sort of neutral strip of uninhabited land between the Gan' and Bari tribes we found quite a natural game reserve, full of antelope, giraffe, elephant, and smaller fry. Another camp on the Semliki River, down in Butuku to the south end of the Albert Nyanza, is made memorable to me by the visit of a hippo, which came grunting out of the reeds through a patch of sweet potatoes and quite close up to my tent. This was the most desperate place for mosquitoes I have ever been in. Each night just as the sun set a deep hum was to be heard like the sound of a great crowd murmuring in the distance. As it drew nearer I would hasten to finish my evening meal, and then bolt







CAMP ON THE UMA RIVER, BETWEEN NIMULE AND GONDOKORO.

## On the Road

incontinently into my net to escape the bloodthirsty millions which soon filled every corner of the tent. Once in safety, there I stayed, undressing in the net and lying in bed to read till sleepy.

More domestic interests marked the nights I spent at different times at the village of a big Gan' chief named Awic. This man went in for live-stock of various kinds, including a donkey for riding, which entirely scorned all lodging for the night, and roamed about at its own sweet will. One night I was awakened by the noise of heavy breathing just by my head in the porch of the tent. This was rather alarming until I was reassured by the unmistakable stamp of a hoof and the champ of teeth, and discovered that the donkey had come into the porch to shelter from a shower of rain. On another occasion our whole caravan were much entertained by the antics of a tame ostrich belonging to this same chief Awic. Its solemn gait and deliberate consumption of grass and gravel had been the source of much interest, but we were all convulsed with laughter when the dignified bird suddenly began to gravely dance a sort of waltz, footing it in quite an elegant style round and round in circles. Awic's three tame wart hogs were anything but elegant or savoury, but amusing little chaps all the same, coming up to any one and rubbing their heads along his legs in petition for a scratch. Alas! they were so unfraternal as to be put to sleep always in separate pens, as otherwise they would have been in danger of their lives, so fiercely did they fight. This same night we

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

had an exciting time with a herd of bullocks. Awic had given me one as a present, and I promptly shot it for meat. We took the precaution to have the carcase skinned at some distance from the kraal, but the rest of the herd followed the smell of the fresh blood and spent a furious hour tearing up the ground, where it was stained, with horn and hoof, bellowing and roaring in the most terrific manner. As the blood-stained spot was close to my tent, I quite expected that the maddened beasts might stampede at any moment and trample the camp and myself in bed into a heap of debris.

A weird experience was afforded me by a moonlight hippo hunt on Lake Salisbury. I set out in a large canoe late in the afternoon and was paddled to a small inlet which was said to be a favourite haunt ; it proved also to be a favourite hunting-ground, which meant that the hippo were all exceedingly wild, and promptly bolted into the sudd lining the shore at the first approach of our craft. None made their appearance at all till the sun was nearly setting ; then a good-sized bull put up his head well away from the land. The canoe crept up to try to cut him off from the sudd. We were about one hundred yards from him when he saw us and promptly dived. By the ripples we could see which way he was swimming under water, and the paddlers bent furiously to their work, trying to get close by the time he rose to breathe. Four times he rose during the race for land, and four times I tried to snap him ere he sank again ; but the dance of the boat under me was too lively

## On the Road

to make accurate aim possible, and our quarry reached the dense sudd in safety. Again and again we tried to get up to hippo, which rose here and there, but every time the wily brutes escaped. At length the sun set in a blaze of orange and red, and the heads popped up and down in water the colour of blood. As the light faded in the west the hippo grew bolder, and we were able to get closer; by the time the moon rose great dim black heads were dotting the smooth water around us in all directions, lifting themselves out of the muddy depths in waves and spray of phosphorescence, while deep grunts of defiance greeted us from those at a safe distance. Again and again we stole up to one and another, and many a snapshot I hazarded from the bows of the boat, steady enough now that it was too dark to see the sights of my rifle. The placid lake was bespangled with the reflections of countless stars, on the shore twinkled the lights of village fires and flitting fire-flies; the hippo gleamed and grunted, rose and sank, and still we paddled round and round, fascinated by the weird beauty of the scene, as well as by the game of hide-and-seek we were playing with the huge brutes in the now gorgeous moonlight. Not till I thought of the march that had to be done next day did I tear myself away, not knowing whether I had hit anything or not; only some days afterwards did I receive the teeth of two hippo which were found dead the following day by the Bakeni paddlers.

But after all the main interest to the missionary

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

in his travels is the human one ; *quidquid agunt homines* is his study both with camera and conversation. Whenever I smell dry hay, I fly back in mind to the days I spent in a canoe with Archdeacon Walker, when first coming to Uganda, and the wild chant of the Basese islanders as they paddled us day by day across the Victoria Nyanza. Hour after hour we lay on dry grass on the bottom of the canoe, under an awning of sticks and canvas, while my companion explained to me the songs and conversation of our boatmen, or yarned to me of the old days in Uganda before the British Government replaced the romance of life with its security. In after years I made records of some of these songs on the phonograph ; but I shall always think of them to the accompaniment of the thud of the paddles against the canoe thwarts, to the swing of the rocking boat as it rose to the tireless strokes, with the smell of the hay in my nostrils and the swish of the waves in my ears.

Very pleasant are my recollections of a hospitable old man I once met in the south of Mwenge when on an itineration. We camped at his village, which consisted of his solitary hut and a pen for his few goats. Poor though the old man was, he received us most readily, set his women to cook food for the caravan, got all the best he had for our entertainment, and made us comfortable. Then after I had had my evening meal he came to call, and brought with him his harp to play to me. The harp consisted of a plain bow of wood, like one for shooting, strung with a single string. The

## On the Road

lower end of this was rested on an upturned gourd, which acted as sounding-board, but was in no way attached to the bow. From the single string the old man produced about three notes by stopping with the finger. His voice was, to say the least, *passé*, but the true courtesy of his action was so apparent that I really enjoyed the travesty of music, and could sincerely thank him for his kindness.

To return again to Patiko. On one journey I camped at a village where there had been, so I was told, a great many deaths from some mysterious disease. Further inquiry revealed the fact that this disease was supposed to be due to the presence of spirits underneath a pile of rocks not far away. I went to see one patient, but could do nothing for him, as there were no symptoms apparent beyond a high temperature, and he was evidently moribund. The head-man of the village begged me to stay and go to these rocks and drive away the spirits for them; they were said to manifest their presence by talking in loud tones, but only after dark and not every night. I was obliged to leave next day, and never passed that way again, so the voices may still be audible for all I know.

Superstition marks out for mention another camp in the Gan' country, in the Bura district. When I reached the village I found a *séance* in progress inside one of the huts, from which proceeded the sound of horns, drums, and rattles. Some one was sick, and the evil spirit was to be driven out by means of the "music," while one of the women, attired in a kilt of leaves, was writhing about out-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

side the hut in a sort of dance. Very soon, they told me, her contortions would increase in violence as the spirit took possession of her, till at length she would be howling and rolling on the ground. A request to the head-man of the village procured the postponement of the incantations till some future occasion. If we had known the language of the people, we might have told them of a more excellent way and of One whose servants fear no evil spirits.

Another sad camp was at a Madi village between Nimule and Gondokoro, where practically all the inhabitants were afflicted with guinea-worm. This pest infests the wells and streams in many parts of Uganda in the form of a microscopic embryo, which grows to full size in the body of its victim, eventually piercing the skin of leg, foot, or arm, and causing a small sore, from which the head of the worm protrudes. As I walked round the village named, I found before nearly every house some unfortunate seated, trying to cut out the worms with an arrow-head, or perhaps winding the extruded portion on to a small stick to draw it further out. All I could do was to warn the poor creatures through my interpreter that the only cure was prevention by boiling all the water before use.

Sometimes one finds the chief whose hospitality is being enjoyed in need of a little advice ; in the evening he takes you aside and consults you as to the best means of paying a debt or getting out of some scrape. Samwiri, one of the chiefs in the Mwenge district, was always in debt, owing to his







A PATIKO HOMESTEAD IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY.

## On the Road

indulgence in jam and other expensive European commodities, and he used to consult me as to the advisability of making a trading expedition to the Baamba country to the west of Ruwenzori, where ivory was to be had cheap, or whether it would be safer to sell off a few cows. One of the Teso chiefs once took me with an air of great mystery into an empty house and confided to me that he had a tusk of ivory concealed under the bed, which he was afraid to offer for sale in the bazaar, lest he should be arrested for illicit hunting of elephants. Would I buy it off him, as he wanted the money to get a new bicycle? Needless to say, I declined to have anything to do with such a transaction, and advised him to make all safe by selling the ivory to the Government.

Ideas of hospitality vary in Uganda. Among the Gan' it was quite the common custom to ask your visitor for a present, and this was not unknown among the Teso. An old blind chief, by name Kolimon', to whose village I went to spy out the land with a view to Christian work there, in spite of the fact that he could do nothing but sit and wait for death, yet begged for a gift of some sort, perhaps in lieu of the medicine that was not forthcoming to cure his sightless eyes.

But the Baganda have very different notions as to what is due to a guest, and their hospitality is sometimes embarrassing, more often welcome. In the Teso country we were offered tea or coffee (of a sort) by all the Baganda agents, whensoever we stopped to rest or camp at their houses, and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

I have been more than once entirely dependent on them for a night's lodging. When on the way to nurse a colleague who was seriously ill with blackwater fever, I halted for the night at a place called Serere, expecting my porters to get in before darkness came on. We had not started till late in the day and a heavy storm prevented the men doing more than half of the march I had covered on my bicycle. The Muganda agent of Serere was away from home, so it looked as if I was in for a miserable night. But the wife of the agent at another station was there on a visit, and in a twinkling she had all arranged, when she heard of my predicament. She had a meal cooked for me, beef (curried) and boiled plain-tains; she had the chief's bedding found and a bed made; got a fire lighted and made me comfortable generally.

This was all to the good; once at Kamuli, in Busoga, hospitality was embarrassing. In company with a fellow missionary I went in the afternoon to call upon a local dignitary, who was an old friend of my companion. When we had been chatting for some time preparations were made for refreshment, and expecting just a cup of tea, we made no demur. To our dismay we were confronted with a meal of several courses, and substantial ones at that, and with great difficulty did our best to avoid the imputation of despising the viands by at least sampling all that was put before us.

Last, but not least, there come to mind all

## On the Road

the camps where talks with teachers or with native Christians cheered and encouraged, where bright little services united white and black in happy intercourse. Particularly I remember a very pleasant visit to a place in Mwenge called Kicumu, where there was a little old dwarf who lived in the teacher's house. She came in to chat many times during my stay, and we tried to get at some idea of her age by reckoning up the reigns of the kings she could remember. I calculated that she must be about eighty, but her memory was not of the best, and we might have been many years out. I baptized her by the name of Maliza (Martha), and a true, bright Christian she was.

A visit to some lonely teacher, far away from all friends of his own tribe, is an uplift to both black and white. The missionary is cheered by the devotion or zeal of the solitary soldier at his outpost, the teacher has little difficulties to discuss and successes to recount. He will dwell with pleasure and pardonable pride on the great increase of readers at one village and explain how the people have moved away from another and left the church deserted. He will complain that the chief of one place is dilatory in getting the little mud church finished that you marked out on your last visit, and that the chief of another has completed a building and waits for some one to hold service in it. He may appeal for authority, which you have not got, to prevent Sunday labour, and give you an order for reading sheets and Gospels to be sold to his con-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

gregation. If the station has been open some months there may be candidates to be examined as to their fitness for baptism, and classes to be rearranged according to the progress made by the various scholars. Then you commend him to the Friend who does not come and go, and pass on to the next station.

So the missionary has a great advantage over the casual traveller in his opportunities for entering into the human interests as well as for conversation and for penetrating into the byways and backwaters where native life is still more or less untouched by civilisation. In such rambles through the villages a camera is of great service in making one keep one's eyes open for likely subjects and so directing attention to what might otherwise pass unnoticed. Many photographs must inevitably need apology to the artistic as being mere records, but the observant may get some real pictures which are of little value as records, and yet enrich his album.

## APPENDIX TO PART I

### "THE BUGANDA TIMES"

THERE is given here a *résumé* and partial translation of the November number of the little monthly brochure issued in Buganda under the title of *Ebifa mu Buganda*, which might be rendered the *Buganda Times*. The publication is interesting as an illustration of the capabilities of the Baganda, both in the actual manual work of production, which is entirely the work of pupils at the King's School, Budo, but more still in the composition of the contents of the paper. The editor indeed is a European, one of the masters at the above school, but the contributors are almost exclusively native, and the paper serves as an advertising medium, a historical educator, a link between the capital and "over-seas" workers in the protectorate, and an opportunity for ventilating grievances or matters of public interest, as well as giving the latest news from all parts of Uganda, to say nothing of world items of intelligence.

The issue for November, 1911, bears on its red cover the legend Cents 13 (a trifle over 2d.), for which price the paper is to be purchased. Inside the cover front and back are advertisements, one stating that Mengo Planters, Ltd., are prepared to

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

buy coffee-berries in any quantity, the other giving notice that the Uganda Company have for sale plants of cocoa, coffee, and rubber at so much per hundred.

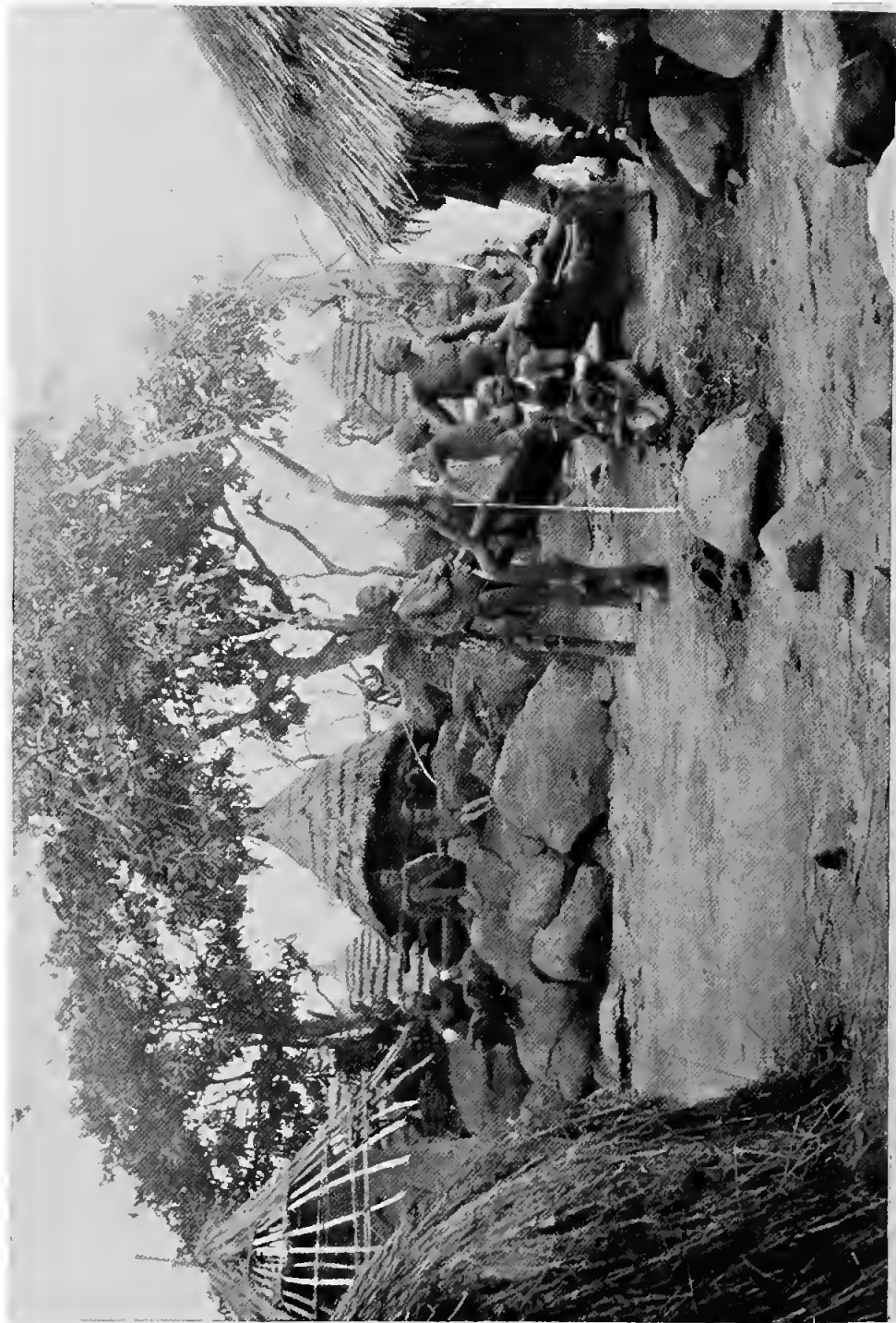
The editor only allows himself two paragraphs, one giving instructions as to the payment of annual subscriptions in stamps, and the other passing on a warning about the careless treatment of children by their mothers, emphasised by the sad and harrowing history of a poor mite that was left to itself and badly mauled by a dog.

After the editorial we have three announcements of change of name, the advertiser in each case abandoning his accepted appellation in favour of his clan name. The first article is contributed by the native pastor working at Hoima, the Rev. Nuwa Nakiwafu, and of this a translation will be found below. Next comes an account of the celebration of the anniversary of the accession of the King of Bunyoro, who has now ruled nine years.

An "over-seas" contribution follows, from the boy employed as hospital assistant at the Government station Mbale, the headquarters of the Eastern Province. Of this a translation is given, and also of the next article, an account of a leopard hunt, which exhibits the hardihood and courage of the Baganda. A short description of a terrific storm in the Buruli district, and the consequent floods, leads up to a historical contribution by Sir Apolo Kagwa, the Grand Old Man of Buganda, who recalls the glories of some by-gone notabilities and traces the connection with their distinguished posterity now living.







A CHAT IN A PATIKO VILLAGE.

## “The Buganda Times”

Items of European news follow, translated from English newspapers by E. Bakaluba, and include the assassination of the Prime Minister of Russia, and details of a hailstorm in Spain, when the stones reached the size of tennis-balls.

The final article is the first instalment of an account of the visit paid by some of the Basoga and Teso chiefs to the King of Buganda, and how they were fetched from the lake steamer to Kampala in the Government motor-car.

### TRANSLATIONS

#### HOIMA, BUNYORO

My friends, I want to tell you about this nation, that of Bunyoro, how it is. I think there are some who do not know the nation of Bunyoro what it is like, although we are neighbours, yet many do not know it well. I have spent a very long time in this nation doing my work in it. I first lived in Toro in the year 1894. I left there in the year 1897. Again since I lived here in Hoima, I came in the year 1899-1911, I have now completed sixteen years in this nation, I understand well all matters in Bunyoro, well therefore I do not lie to you, or misrepresent any of what I write about this nation, telling it to you here.

Well, let me first tell you how that this nation was very great, from Ntimba in Bunyala, as far as Busongola, a very big journey that, if you walk it on your feet. Well see how big all Bunyoro was, it contained sixteen tribes, moreover every tribe speaks its own dialect. Also every dialect has a

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

great difference, when you have been a long time in Bunyoro, you quickly understand a man as he speaks, and say He is a man from So-and-so. Again they themselves mock and laugh at one another saying Hear that fellow from So-and-so, how he speaks.

Well then these are the tribes in Bunyoro, on the side of the sun-rising, there are these :—

- |                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1 Bunyala, = Bugerere | 9 Bugangazi   |
| 2 Bululi              | 10 Kyaka      |
| 3 Cope                | 11 Mwenge     |
| 4 Busindi             | 12 Kitagwenda |
| 5 Bugungu             | 13 Toro       |
| 6 Lugonjo = Palajoki  | 14 Butuku     |
| 7 Bugahya             | 15 Mboga      |
| 8 Buyaga              | 16 Busongola. |

Well, all those tribes are Bunyoro, one whole. Their distinguishing mark is to extract the teeth<sup>1</sup> and to burn cicatrices on the forehead. All of them were ruled by one king, Yokana Kabalega Cwa. But now Bunyoro is left very small, ruled by his son A. B. Duhaga, because Buganda ate up much of it, ate off it six tribes, viz :—

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 Bunyala = Ntimba | 4 Bugangazi    |
| 2 Bululi           | 5 Buyaga       |
| 3 Lugonjo          | 6 Kyaka (part) |

Again, out of it came the kingdom of Daudi Kasagama, and he ate off it these tribes :—

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1 Toro       | 5 Busongola    |
| 2 Kitagwenda | 6 Mboga        |
| 3 Mwenge     | 7 Kyaka (part) |
| 4 Butuku     |                |

---

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the lower incisors.

## “The Buganda Times”

But now Mboga has been taken over by the Belgian Europeans, it has been separated from Toro. Well now to-day Bunyoro was left with these tribes: (1) Bugahya, and (2) Busindi, and (3) Cope, and (4) Bugungu, and (5) part of Bululi. But now Bugungu has perished of sleeping-sickness, the Government have removed all the people that were left, now it is mere jungle. Again, in Cope there is sleeping-sickness, all the people there are dying very much, and there too the Government wants to take away all the people because of the sleeping-sickness. To-day Bunyoro has left only two full provinces, Bugahya and Busindi, that is the kingdom of A. B. Duhaga which he rules these days.

Well then my friends, this land of Bunyoro, in all its borders, God made in it wonderful things, viz., There are in it two holes from which come salt, Kibiro, whence comes the salt known as *nsero*, and Katwe, whence comes the salt known as *kisula*. But at Kibiro whence the salt comes, wonder much to see how God made that place. Well the works of God which are at Kibiro are very many, I cannot speak of them in detail; well I will tell you these. When you get to the hole from which they scrape the salt, you see hot water as if boiling for tea in which you can't bear your hand. Sometimes European visitors who go to look at that place, try tying up some plaintains or potatoes or eggs, and they tie them in plaintain bark and throw them into the water of the hole, immediately they are already cooked. Again at Kibiro there is

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

not a single jigger, from long ago when jiggers first came until the present time, there is not a jigger there. If a man goes to Kibiro with his feet full of jiggers, and stays there four days or five, why he has not a single jigger. Moreover many diseases get well at Kibiro, on account of washing in that hot water, (the sick) get well. Again, sirs, there are two places in Toro, one is by the River Lwimi, they call it Lwagimba, and that too is of water as hot as that of Kibiro. Again also there is another place called Bulanga, that is on the hill Toro, which the Baganda call Gamba-lagala, and it is of hot water, the water of it bubbles up out of the earth while you watch (the water of beans that are on the cooking stones, when they are about to dry up). In that place they prepare salt, they scrape it off the ground there, not the kind called *nsero* nor that called *kisula*.

Again in the nation of Bunyoro in all its borders, they all have one important point which is not found in the other nations that surround Buganda, but only in Bunyoro, viz., *Mpako* or Titles. But that word they are very fond of, also they hold it in great honour, and every great man is called by his *Mpako*. If you greet a great man you greet him by his *Mpako*, and your friend it is well to greet by his *Mpako*, that is to give him honour. See what makes it a matter of importance, there is the *Mpako* of His Majesty, not addressed to any other person, not even to a prince, not even to one like a Prime Minister, you may not address it to him, except to the King himself. Again the





A TUNNEL, ENTRANCE TO RAISED BACHELOR QUARTERS AT DOKOLO, IN THE LAN'O COUNTRY.

(See p. 97.)



## “The Buganda Times”

King they address him by it during the hours of the morning until midday, but at one o'clock until two you must not address him by that Mpako. Well those Mpako have their names, viz. :—

1 Akiki	7 Alali
2 Amoti	8 Apuli
3 Atwoki	9 Atenye
4 Adyeri	10 Acali
5 Abwoli	11 Bala
6 Aboki	12 Akali (that of His Majesty)

Again a man if he is angry with his wife, if his wife calls him by his Mpako he answers her, he cannot keep silence to her. From which you understand that the Mpako in Bunyoro is a thing of exceeding great honour.

. . . . .

Well then, my friends, these are not the words of Bunyoro alone, no, but I have written just a few little bits, that you may know about Bunyoro, what it is like.

N. K. NAKIWAFU.

### MBALE, BUKEDI

Sirs, I tell you of a wonderful thing, about a tree which fell and set itself up again; that tree they call *Mweramanyo*. It came to pass that it fell, a whole year from the time that it fell it grew dry, the Bagisu stripped off all its branches, it was of great size, perhaps four yards (? in circumference), and they split a great deal off it, perhaps there were two yards left, and it planted itself in the hole which it fell out of.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

When the morning broke, a Mugisu went to split off firewood, he found the tree standing upright ! He ran off and told his companions The tree is standing upright, and all the people went to look, and they gave the alarm cry, and very many people went to see. And every one who had a fowl and goat and cow took it to kill it at that tree.

Also, sirs, we saw a marvel, a storm came on on September 25, 1911, with thunder, at half-past one, it rained heavily ; and the storm killed six men, as they were building the house of Kapitani Baviro (Captain Bovell), and also on the hill Bubabi it killed four people, to add all together with those that died on the house ten persons, it was a terrible thing, sirs.

Also again there is in this land of Bukedi now a disease that is strange, it has killed many people. But we are perplexed to understand it, a person falls ill in the morning and by two o'clock he is dead. It does not give a person long, all the same it is not Plague, no. Well my friends, help us in praying for us to take away this evil. Also our doctor Seresi (Sells) has made great efforts to get our houses nice so that they may not be bad. Well do you also make efforts to pray to God for us.

SEMIONI KATENDE.

### LEOPARD HUNT IN THE CAPITAL

Sirs, I want to chat with you about the battle that took place here in our capital Mengo, on the day Saturday, Oct. 7, 1911. To make a long

## “The Buganda Times”

story short the leopard caught a jackal, and took it to Ibulaimu Masiki's place, and ate it behind his house ; in the morning time on that day it entered into the house of that chief I. Masiki, and found the lady Lebeka Nampewo and bit her in the hand and leg, and went into the inside of the house. Then immediately they go and tell P. Balintuma, he came at once and they shut up the whole house, also they beat the drum, and the whole city came ; then it was half-past seven o'clock when we hunted the leopard, and when eight o'clock came it bit the boy of P. Balintuma in the arm ; then at once came also the great chief Z. K. Kisingiri, with a number of other chiefs, and he asked Where is it ? And they tell him It is in the house inside. Then forthwith there came out three men, their names are Alifairi Busulwa, and Zozefu Lubandi, and Obadia Zake, and they enter the house, and find the leopard asleep, and they touched it. Then the leopard made no delay in getting up, and made for the windows where they had climbed, also it did not stay long there but turned back whence it came ; one of the men whom I told you of hit it with a stick, also he gave it another ; again also one of them seized it by the tail, and another seized it by the leg ; then when it saw they had held it fast and it had no way to turn, it roared fiercely with a huge voice ; and it was half-past eight and they threw it down and killed it. Also immediately they took it outside, because they had killed it in the house. Then when the leopard was quite dead, it was taken into the market-place, and Mrs. Cook

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

and A. R. Cook, and E. N. Cook and the lady the bringer-up of the children of Cook, came to see ; when they reached it they photographed it and also examined it. When they had finished, we picked up our leopard and took it to His Highness The King Daudi Cwa, we found him at his house Twekobe sitting down, and the great chief Sir Apolo Kagwa, K.C.M.G., Prime Minister, was also there, and many other chiefs there talking with the King. Then when we reached the presence of the King, the leader of the leopard hunt related to the King how we had hunted the leopard ; when he had finished the King congratulated him, the leader of the hunt did deep obeisance for his congratulations ; also when he had finished to make obeisance he announced to the King those three brave men, and the King praised them warmly for their courage, and gave to each of them a present of five rupees, and they did very deep obeisance, and departed rejoicing. Then the hunting of the leopard came to an end.

But sirs, those men were wonderful in their strength and to be marvelled at. Well then my friends, that was how I saw the danger that was in our capital here ; was it not a fearful thing for a leopard to come into the capital ? Well then sirs, farewell.

Your servant

ERASITO S. MWAGALANYI.

## PART II

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE AFRICAN HOMESTEAD

“Sleeping in mud-walled prisons, steeping their food in smoke.”  
RUDYARD KIPLING.

FROM a call at an African house, especially if one has a ticklish nose, one is apt to carry away a dominant impression of smoke, nothing but smoke. To study the arrangements of the interior, to shelter from the rain, and still more to examine a patient, are made most trying to both eyes and nostrils by the pungent, smoke-laden atmosphere. Smoke is, indeed, the all-pervading element; the food is impregnated with the flavour of it; the milk pots are cleansed ( ? ) in it, so that the milk tastes strongly of it; the persons and clothes of your acquaintances are so steeped in it that in the odour of that sanctity they live, die, and are buried. It is really surprising how much can be done with the smoke of one small fire, when it is turned loose in a confined space with no upward outlet.

Particularly vivid are my memories of smoke at one camp on the Mountains of the Moon; we were climbing to reach the foot of the glacier,

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

and had covered about half of the distance between our base camp and the goal, when we were delayed by a wet day. Rain, of course, we had been prepared for, but when it began before we got up, continued while we undressed for the day (the cold forbade preparations for sleep other than the addition to our day clothes of a few rugs), grew heavier while we made a frugal breakfast, and closed around us in a "dead, dumb fog," we decided to wait until it stopped before we proceeded upwards. As it did *not* stop till late in the afternoon, we had the whole day in camp; luggage had been reduced for the climb to the barest necessities, so employment we had none, and the hours dragged slowly. In an evil moment some one suggested a fire. Depressed by the dreary drip of the rain on the canvas, by the grim, grey lichens that festooned all the trees like sad memories of foliage long dead, and by the *ennui* that gripped our souls as the raw cold did our bodies—we agreed. If it had not been for the genius of the African in making a fire out of anything or nothing, no one would have dreamed of attempting to extract warmth out of the heap of sodden giant heather-stems which had been collected for fuel. But the boys succeeded, after strenuous struggles, in getting a fire started—succeeded, alas, all too well. The fire had been lighted on the windward side of the tent, because there was a swamp to leeward, and in a few minutes we were in a fog of damp smoke. We tried to console ourselves with the thought that it would burn up soon and make a cheery





CAMP ON RUWENZORI WHERE IT RAINED ALL DAY.

(See p. 92.)



## The African Homestead

blaze ; we tried to forget the smarting of our eyes in commenting on the violence of our sneezes. That fire seemed to rather extract warmth out of us in the vain effort to dry the fuel, and we did not wait for it to burn up ; we called the boy to carry it away bodily, and in so doing he was in but little danger of burning his fingers. Our attempt to get warm had ended in smoke.

In the native house there is no difficulty in getting warm, at least to us ; the primary object of all native architecture seems to be to exclude any air that might possibly enter, lest it should be cold. Never mind if the smoke does not get out so long as the cold air does not get in. Ventilation, not clericalism, "is the enemy." And after all when your clothes consist of red paint and brass wire, and your bedding of a dried cow's hide stretched on the bare ground, you do not much appreciate a draught down your back. There is less excuse for the more clothed peoples, such as the Banyoro, yet their houses are perhaps even stuffier than those of the naked tribes. I remember once being called out at night to see a sub-chief at Butiti, my first station. It was a fresh, cool night, and I quite enjoyed the walk over to the house. But inside the hut was too terrible. The patient was suffering from nothing more serious than a bilious attack, but he might well have complained of asphyxia. It was a small hut, built of grass, with several partitions, and not more than some twelve feet in diameter. But I counted four fires and twelve people keeping the poor man warm, and very glad

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

I was to get out into the air again, for inside it was practically impossible to either breathe or see.

There are, in fact, grades of closeness in the styles of architecture according to the nakedness of the designers, the height of the doorway, and consequent lightness of the house also depending more or less on the amount of air tolerated by the owners. The houses of the well-clad Baganda can be entered often without stooping, have two doorways, and are light enough to see to read in almost any part. The Banyoro build similar houses, of poorer quality and smaller size, with lower doorways, and seldom more than one doorway to a house. Ventilation is secured to some extent by the flimsiness of the walls and disrepair of the thatch, but is, on the other hand, impeded by hangings of barkcloth and other partitions, intended to secure some degree of privacy at the back of the house. The habit of strewing the floor with fine grass has done much to spread and perpetuate some skin diseases among the Baganda and Banyoro, particularly the latter, as they are so much less cleanly in their habits than the Baganda. The flimsy nature of many of the houses in Bunyoro and Toro is typical of the general instability of life in those districts, where no one seems to be sure of his holding from one day to the next, and, in consequence, is disinclined to cultivate much ground or put much solid work into his house.

A somewhat better style of architecture is affected by the Bagisu. Their rigid clan system makes moving a difficult matter, as no one can move out

## The African Homestead

of the strip of land belonging to his clan without endangering his life; even firewood must be gathered strictly within the prescribed limits, or a spear thrust may be the result. So the houses are built two or three together, with walls of good thick logs, packed with mud. The doorways are of fair height, and the thatch is almost exclusively of banana bark. Owing to the density of the population grass is hard to obtain, the scanty areas of uncultivated land being kept short cropped by the cattle.

When we come to the Nilotic and other naked tribes we find houses built so as to be as far as possible ventilationless, while at the same time the floors are kept clean swept and smeared with cow-dung. The doorways are quite low, so that even on hands and knees it is sometimes difficult to enter. The walls are made secure against draughts by careful plastering with mud and cow-dung, and the close, fine thatch barely allows egress to the smoke, most of which creeps slowly out by the doorway. Inside one often finds quite a sharp line marking the level of the top of the doorway, above all is thick with smoke, below the line is comparatively fresh air, so that there is no comfort in the house except sitting on the floor, when one's eyes are just below the high-water mark. These houses are built in a style somewhat similar to that of the Bagisu in regard to the woodwork, though they are very different to look at. Logs form the walls, which are about four feet in height; the mud plaster is put on from the inside and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

just pushed through to make it hold, the outside is left rough and the inside smoothed over to make a flat wall. On these walls, which are kept to a true circle, is erected the beehive roof, brought well down to protect as much of the mudwork as possible from the rain. The thatch is of a fine grass, rather like thin straw, tied in tight bundles about the thickness of a man's arm, and laid on neatly in circular flounces, the roots being to the outside. This type of thatch is very commonly leaky, but is quite secure against wind, and needs little patching until very old, owing to the steep pitch of the roof. Houses built in this style may reach very considerable dimensions; one which was lent to us on a wet night by Chief Ogwok must have measured nearly thirty feet in diameter. Large villages are also the custom among the Gan' people, the houses being often built in a series of circles, each just touching the circle next to it.

One of the striking features of the Gan' villages is the special provision of quarters for the unmarried men. Here the principle of no ventilation is carried to an extreme. The huts are small and low, raised up from the ground to a greater or less height on a platform of logs. The doorway consists of a round hole just large enough to wriggle through, and the occupants of these huts sleep as many together as can possibly be packed into the scanty floor space. In wet weather a fire may be lighted on the ground underneath, and it would be hardly possible for the occupants of

## The African Homestead

one of these huts to feel cold, in spite of the total absence of all bedding. The presence of the ashes from the fires underneath the huts may have perhaps given rise to a story which was current among Europeans in the district, but which, so far as I could ascertain by careful inquiry, contained not one grain of truth. This was to the effect that ashes were sprinkled on the ground in front of these bachelors' quarters in order that the village elders might know if any of the young men went out at night. From the extreme licence allowed to the unmarried in this tribe may be judged the improbability of this imported story, while it is evident that nothing would be easier than to evade the test by sprinkling fresh ashes over the foot-marks after returning to the hut. Among the Lan'o the entrance to these raised huts is sometimes prolonged into a regular tunnel of logs, with what object it is difficult to understand. On one occasion I came across a house in which advantage had been taken of the space underneath the log platform to make a pen for goats and sheep. The spaces between the posts were filled in with smaller logs to make a complete wall, and so was produced the prototype of the modern many-storied dwelling.

The Gan' house has usually only one partition, reaching from the left-hand wall, as you enter, to about the centre of the floor. Between this and the door is a raised platform where the goats and sheep pass the night; above the sheep is stored the supply of firewood which is always kept in

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

reserve in case of a wet day. An African housewife's most anxious care, almost, is her fuel supply; there being no space to keep any large stock of such bulky fuel as wood, it is a daily duty to fetch in sticks and logs, and where such are scarce, as in the open grass plains near Wadelai, it is a whole day's work to get in a load of fuel. I remember once remarking to a boy in Butiti that sometimes in England it rains for two or three days with practically no intermission. He at once said, "Why if that happened in our country here, there would not be a fire left and no one would be able to cook any food."

Behind his partition the Gan' householder makes his bed by just spreading on the beaten earth a hide, dried stiff in the sun. For pillow he uses his arm or a log of wood; sometimes he will rest his head on a large stone and sleep as peacefully as we should on the softest down. Bedclothes he has none, as a rule, though he will welcome a blanket readily enough if it costs him nothing. And when we took any of the Gan' as gun-bearers out of their own district we were always obliged to provide them with covering for the night, the houses in Bunyoro being so much less warm and airtight than their own.

The remainder of the house is left for the water-pots, beer-jars, baskets, and other household utensils; a clear space is always kept round the fireplace in which to sit and get warm. The fireplace itself is as a rule made by digging a T-shaped trench, the arms being about a foot long





ARCH OF LOGS AT THE ENTRANCE TO A TESO VILLAGE.

(See pp. 101 and 265.)



## The African Homestead

and eight to ten inches deep. Cooking pots are balanced at the join of the arms, and firewood can be pushed in at the three ends.

The Gan' do not as a rule make any kraal or pen for their numerous cattle, but tether each beast to a short stake by one leg ; the stakes are driven into the ground at any convenient spot just outside the village. Apparently the owners rely on their prowess with spear or gun to keep off marauding beasts or enemies.

The Teso people build very similar houses to the Gan', though with less solid materials. Partitions are dispensed with, and the goats are tethered to pegs driven in the floor at any part of the house that is most convenient, but usually at the back, as far as possible from the door. This is no doubt because of the numerous leopards and hyænas always on the prowl to snap up an unguarded animal. The floor of Teso huts is always much cumbered with the poles that are used to stay up the roof ; the materials used for the wicker-work are usually too weak to make a good job, and by the time the thatch is on hollows begin to appear where the roof is sinking. At each weak spot is planted a pole, and no attempt is made to arrange them symmetrically or plant them at any particular angle ; at any given time a fresh one may be added or a few friends asked in to help give an extra push up where the sinking has produced a bad leak. The knobs and spikes left on the poles where the branches were cut off come in very useful to hang things on, such as small

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

baskets or garments if you happen to have any. Such things as sticks, arrows, or spears are more conveniently thrust in between the sticks of the roof, along with your dispensary letter, if you have been to the missionary for medicine. The crickets and cockroaches will eat holes in the paper and make it illegible, but of course that is not your fault at all but that of the person who gave you so flimsy a letter !

Teso villages are usually small and compact, except in the case of a big chief, who is the owner of many wives. As each wife must have a house to herself, the compound of a wealthy man makes a huge circle, perhaps two hundred yards in diameter, the centre of which is occupied with the numerous granaries, each standing on stones raised on edge to keep out the rats. As a rule a large anthill is made the centre of a village, and round the hill is made the kraal; this is to ensure drainage in bad weather, as no attempt is ever made to clean out a kraal, and if there is no hill in the centre to throw off the rain-water, the whole area soon becomes a sea of mud into which the unfortunate cattle sink knee-deep. A fence of thorns surrounds the kraal at first, and outside that is planted a hedge of prickly euphorbia, which will be grown up by the time the thorns have rotted. The same plan is followed with respect to the village itself; every Teso village is ringed with a hedge of this euphorbia, which is not only prickly but exudes, when wounded, a white milky juice, which is so caustic as to take the skin off a cow's

## The African Homestead

back or destroy the sight of any eye splashed with it. This hedge is planted round the village in a rounded heart shape, with the gateway at the indentation at the top. The two lines of euphorbia are brought round and continued inwards for a few yards, and end in a low archway made of heavy logs, which is just high enough and wide enough to allow of the passage of one cow at a time. Thus protected one would have thought that the cattle would be safe from all marauders, and so as a rule they are. But in one case I heard of the very defences being used against the inhabitants of the village. In this case the cattle were in a separate enclosure outside the village; some thieves came and first blocked the arched entrance to the village itself with thorn-branches, laid roots outwards; they then helped themselves to some cows, and although the lowing of the beasts soon roused the lawful owners, it took them so long to cut a path out through the euphorbia, the thorns being immovable from the inside of the gateway, that the thieves got clean away with their booty.

The Teso build their huts in much the same way as the Gan', only that the walls are of less heavy material. They thatch in the same flounced style, and are fond of finishing off the peak at the top with the neck of an old broken pot, which serves to keep the final bunch of grass from fraying out. Their grain stores are also very similar, the largest being all made of plaited basket-work, smeared with the inevitable cow-dung to close up the inter-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

stices. But they make another sort of granary peculiar to themselves, not of wicker but of hay-bands imbedded in mud. These are laid one on the other and built and moulded up into the shape of a huge water-pot, which remains in its same position so long as the village lasts. It is too brittle to be moved easily, so when the village moves to a fresh site these moulded grain-pots are left to fall to pieces. All granaries are covered over with a little roof like an umbrella made of grass, and are raised from the ground on stones or posts. Inside these roofs is a favourite place in which to store any small article that is easily lost or destroyed, such as small gourds, tins of medicine, or bottles.

A unique style of domicile is affected by the so-called Bakeni people, who inhabit the waterways of Busoga and the adjacent districts. Fugitives probably in the first instance, they now show no disposition to abandon the dominion over the water that they have chosen to themselves, and the advantages of isolation seem to them to quite outweigh the disadvantages of being liable to wake up in the morning half a mile from where you went to bed at night. The Bakeni huts are all built on the islands of floating sudd which clog the channels of the Mpologoma River, Lake Kioga, Lake Salisbury, and the feeder streams of those lakes. Many of the huts are so entirely buried in the long feathery papyrus as to be invisible a few yards off; some are well out on the waters of the lake, in full view of passing canoes, others

## The African Homestead

hidden away down an alley in the sudd, through which you must push your way in a small dug-out if you wish to pay a call. The floors of the huts are kept dry by constantly laying down dried papyrus stems upon the floating mass of roots and rotted vegetation of which the sudd consists, and fires are lighted just as on dry ground. Goats are sometimes to be seen strolling in and out of the huts or sleeping on the platforms of sudd in front of the doorways. Dogs and fowls seem alike indifferent to the fact that they are afloat, and pick up the usual precarious livelihood among the scraps and rubbish heaps.

Naturally the most important article of each household's equipment in this African Venice is its "gondola." This may be anything from a fine new dug-out canoe, holding a dozen men, and used as a ferry-boat at one of the numerous crossing-places, down to a strip of rotten wood, barely hollowed sufficiently to sit in, stuffed in many cracks with fibrous roots and mud, and but a dim ghost of the canoe of which it was once a part. All the Bakeni are used to these frail conveyances from babyhood, and spend most of their time paddling to and fro, sometimes standing, more often sitting, with only a walking-stick for a paddle or even a spear haft. They twist and turn in and out of their tortuous water lanes and alleys, step in and out of crazy relics that do not look as if they would float alone, much less carry a passenger, and feel as much at home paddling about among the crocodiles and hippo as we might in an ocean

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

liner. The women spend much time in them, sitting fishing with rod and line ; the men confine their efforts to setting fish traps, huge baskets which are anchored to some patch of sudd a little distance beneath the surface. Part of the fish caught is used as a means of bartering for the grain foods grown on the mainland, while for their clothing and other luxuries the men are dependent mainly on their earnings as ferrymen. They have a great reputation among native wayfarers for cool independence of manner and complete indifference to the convenience of any one wishing to cross in a hurry. Being quite inaccessible except by water and sole proprietors of the boats, they find it easy to command the situation and make every one await their pleasure. Their stores of dry food, such as grain, are kept in granaries, erected on separate sudd islands, which float hither and thither about the lakes as they are driven by the wind ; so that one could almost imagine a mother sending out her daughter to see where the cupboard was and bring in the supper ! Another source of food beside the fish is the birds which abound on all the open water, and more still in the lanes between the sudd islands. Nothing comes amiss to the Mukeni's appetite, and nothing pleases him better than for you to shoot him a cormorant or two, or even one of the little brown lily hoppers that skip so agilely from leaf to leaf of the water plants. Snares are often set for these birds in the shape of a noose of string hung between two sticks that project just above the water at some favourite alighting-place.





A MUKENI CHIEF AT HOME, LAKE NAGWO.

(See p. 102.)



## The African Homestead

Not many are caught in this manner, so the advent of a European with a shot-gun is hailed with delight.

The poorest houses I have seen built by any tribe are those of the Madi, along the Nile between Nimule and Gondokoro. In diameter not more than eight or nine feet and perhaps ten in height at the centre, these huts are also the poorest in quality of all in Uganda. The doorways are so low that it is almost impossible to enter without lying flat down, a proceeding which the dirtiness of the villages would render distasteful to say the least of it. A favourite way of making a threshing floor among these people is to inlay a portion of the ground just in front of the house with all the little scraps of pottery, broken china, &c., that can be secured, making a sort of rough mosaic.

In all parts of Uganda houses are now beginning to spring up of European shape, and more or less European materials, from the elaborate mansions erected by the big chiefs in Buganda to the feeble efforts made in outlying parts to copy doors, windows, and architecture with totally inadequate materials and knowledge. Many houses are begun on far too large a scale and never get further than the foundations, or perhaps a brick shell with native doors and the windows sealed up with grass.

At one time the prime requisite is extravagant size; at another the additional prestige of two stories offers irresistible attractions, with much resultant waste of good timber and labour in the erection of monstrosities labelled staircases, the sole

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

advantage of which is that they are so extremely unstable that no one is likely to risk his life in attempting to ascend them. In numberless chiefs' villages are to be seen these monuments of disappointed ambition, unfinished houses, witness to the never-sated thirst for being held in honour, and to the instability of the child mind, which is never tired of inaugurating elaborate schemes without the ability to calculate the chances of successful completion.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FOOD SUPPLY

“He eats and hath indigestion,  
He toils and he may not stop,  
His life is a long-drawn question  
Between a crop and a crop.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

WHEN I first arrived up country in 1901, before I had learnt any Luganda, I used to listen to the rattle of native conversation and long to be able to understand what was said; but a senior missionary remarked when I told him of this wish, “You would not hear anything worth listening to if you could understand.” And very soon I found out the truth of this; the bulk of conversation between Africans, at any rate the peasants, may be summed up in two words—goats and women!

The all-important business of life is to get enough to eat and have a wife to cook it for you, and among the Bantu tribes the wife does the bulk of the getting as well as the preparing. It would hardly be unfair to say that the motto of the average native is, “Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die!” Their god is indeed their belly.

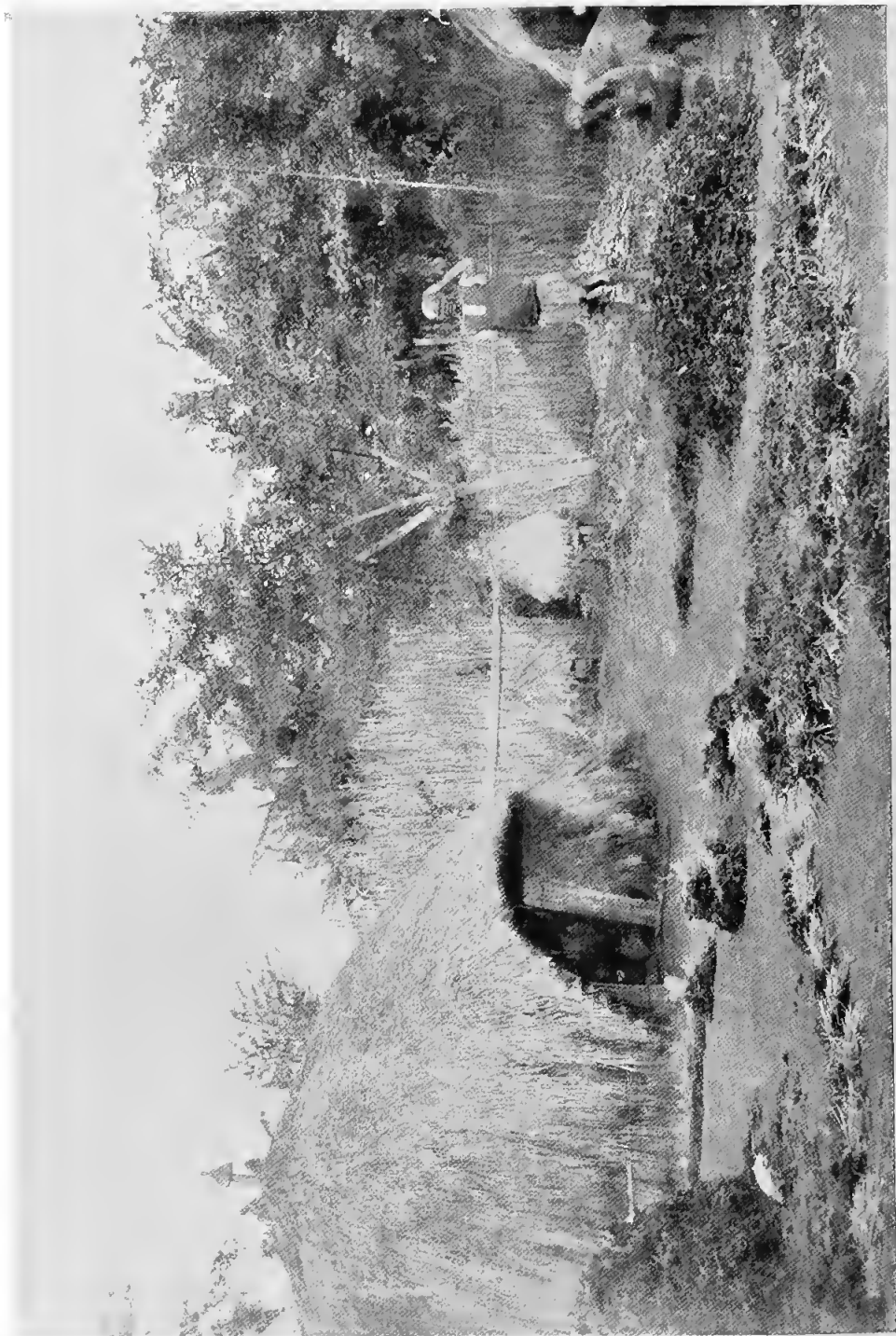
As might be expected, this crops up in the proverbs; the Banyoro sometimes say, *Nganjani ikafa, buli talireyo*, i.e., “Friendship is dead—

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

that means he got nothing to eat when he went on a visit." Another proverb runs : " She who cooks for a husband who hates her finishes all the granary full " ; she has to take a longer turn than the better loved wives. This gives the key to at least one reason for desiring a multiplicity of wives ; I was once told in Patiko that one wife was no good, because if you had visitors she would not be able to manage all the cooking and would grumble at having to do it all by herself every day. The paramount importance of food in a country where no one ever does a stroke more work than he is obliged is also illustrated by the way every seedling of anything eatable is left growing even in the middle of a road ; the weeders would not dream of pulling up the smallest food plant, even though it be growing where it is certain to be trodden under foot.

The whole family and social life of the African, therefore, centres round the question of food supplies ; each must take his share in providing by labour of some sort or other, unless he be rich enough to hire labour or buy food, which is often considered one of the great advantages of being a chief. (This is not the case, however, in the Gan' country, where all but the most important chiefs take their share in the work.) The year is divided according to the seasons for sowing, reaping, &c., and reference to past events is constantly dated by the sowing of the beans, the growth of the millet, or the reaping of the semsem. The Teso people have a complete calendar of months,





GRAIN HARVEST IN MBOGA, NOW PART OF THE CONGO STATE.

## The Food Supply

according to the agricultural seasons and periods, *e.g.*, Odun'e is the month when the rains begin, April, Ololo answers to May, the time for the swelling of the millet, Opo is the stubble month September, and Osokosokoma corresponds to our November, the season when the grass dries up.

Among the Banyoro the extent of cultivation is very meagre, the tilling being done by the women and only barely sufficing in many cases to just keep body and soul together in the members of the family. But the Nilotic tribes cultivate huge areas, and usually have ample supplies of food of all sorts. The main part of the work is done by the men and boys, the women only collecting and burning the weeds and weeding the grain crops. About seven in the morning we used to see strings of men and lads leaving the villages in Patiko, with their hoes over their shoulders, blowing their shrill whistles as they went; a few women and girls would usually accompany them to cook them a meal in the middle of the day. If one walked through a village in the height of the season during the daytime the place would be deserted but for a few old women and small children. About four in the afternoon back streamed the workers, merrily singing and joking with one another, the songs sometimes referring to the charms of some young lady, much as English ditties are wont to do. One simple refrain I heard compared the admired one's waist to that of the little black ant, the words coming over and over again—" *Lan'inin'ini maber twatwal.*"

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

The style of hoe-handle employed varies in different districts, even of the same tribe. Some of the Teso people use the short, crooked handle employed by the Baganda and Banyoro, but in the north a straight stick is used, with the hoe tied on the end after the manner of an English spade. In Patiko a more forcible fashion of digging is practised, necessitating more leverage in the hoe, so a handle with a crook is used, but quite three times the length of the Bantu pattern. The Gan' also sow the largest variety of crops perhaps; millet of many kinds, semsem in large quantities, ground nuts, a little maize, sweet potatoes, and a good assortment of minor herbs, beans, &c. The Teso people too rely on millet for their main supplies, but are only beginning to learn the use of semsem; their chief subsidiary crop is that of ground nuts, and they grow a good number of potatoes. The Banyoro use plaintains to some extent, but prefer millet or potatoes, with semsem and other herbs as relishes.

The reaping is usually done by all, men and women all taking a share in this part of the great work of food getting; in Patiko the whole village would turn out together to reap the millet, nipping off the ears individually with their nails. In Teso a little hook is used, like a miniature sickle, slipped over the middle finger by a ring; with the sharp edge of this the ears are cut off much better than with the nails.

The subsequent preparation of the food devolves entirely upon the women and girls, whose first care



## The Food Supply

is to get the millet dried ; this is done in Patiko and Teso by spreading it out on the rocks, near which villages are usually built, or failing rocks on hard-beaten earth floors. This method is also employed in Bunyoro, while the Madi people along the Nile make floors of a sort of mosaic of bits of pottery, stone, &c., embedded in mud and cow-dung. One of these threshing floors is to be seen in front of each house in many Madi villages. As soon as the grain is dry it has to be threshed, which is done by beating it with heavy sticks. Further drying is then required, as the crops are reaped when hardly ripe, to prevent the waste of grain in gathering it. Finally the millet is laid up in granaries raised on stones to keep out the rats. These granaries are mostly of basket-work, but the Teso people also use a rougher kind made merely of grass in long bands bedded in clay and wound round and round in superimposed coils pressed together into a kind of huge jar. In Patiko great care is expended in preparing the semsem crop, the heads of grain being first dried on a high scaffolding for some weeks before threshing. It is subsequently stored in special granaries of a smaller size than those used for millet. Many tons of this grain are annually exported by the Lan'o tribe by way of Lake Kioga, the grain going mostly to Marseilles for the manufacture of oil.

In Teso large quantities of potatoes are also dried for storing. These are first cut in strips and then dried in the sun on the rocks. Although not equal to fresh roots, these dried potatoes are

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

a great stand-by during the long dry season, as an addition to the grain crops.

The grain being at length fit for food, has next to be cooked. It is first washed and dried after being taken out of the granary, and then ground on a large flat stone by means of a smaller stone rubbed to and fro. A good deal of grit gets mixed with the flour during this process. Sometimes, when the flour is intended for sale, old grains will be included that have already been used for fermenting beer. This naturally does not improve the flavour, and I once had all my boys ill from eating this sort of food, which they complained was very dark in colour and bitter to the taste. The flour is cooked by stirring it into boiling water, till the required consistency is reached ; this again differs in different tribes, the Banyoro boys complaining that the Gan' eat their porridge so stiff as to be "like rock." When ready the mass of dark brown stuff is scraped out of the pot and moulded into a smooth lump with the fingers. Once in Patiko, while sheltering from rain in a native hut, I caught a woman licking her fingers to keep them from sticking to the stuff as she smoothed it over, but I was assured afterwards that this was not the regular practice.

Among the Banyoro it is quite incorrect for men and women to eat together, but in Patiko one sometimes saw a family seated round a mess of porridge all together, in the front of the house. Children too young to eat with the rest are often given a bowl full of raw flour mixed to a stiff paste with

## The Food Supply

sour milk, which they dip out with their fingers and seem to relish.

The monotony of the African's meals is hardly realised by those who have not lived among the people; day in and day out the same old brown porridge twice a day, the only chance of variety being in the relish used with it, or an occasional pot full of potatoes or cob of maize roasted in the ashes.

It is no doubt owing to this sameness of the regular meals that the black man displays such eagerness to get a morsel of meat whenever possible. This meat-hunger is expressed in Lunyoro by a special word *amairu*, which has no equivalent in English, and the same hunger exists in Teso and in Patiko, though the people have no special word to express it. The average Munyoro has not much opportunity to satisfy this craving, being too poor to afford meat often, and not living in a good game country. The Teso country also is for the most part too thickly populated to harbour much game, so the Teso have to resort to other sources of animal food. The Banyoro rely upon the edible grasshopper and termite for relishes, when in season, but the Teso find a perennial supply of meat in the swarms of rats that infest all the villages. These they snare in immense numbers and cook into stews, which they greatly appreciate. But the rats must be caught out of doors, those caught in a house they refuse. The Bagisu tribe, on the foothills of Mount Elgon, also are fond of rats, but are still more fond of human flesh, being one of the few remaining openly

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

cannibalistic tribes in this part of Africa. They habitually devour their fallen enemies and friends, the constant fights affording opportunity for frequent feasts; but more horrible is their habit of eating those who have died of disease, the one exception being the victims of small-pox. When a European died recently at our mission-station among the Bagisu, it was commonly reported among the people that he had died of small-pox, because he was buried and not eaten. But even this rule is not absolute; when I was recently at the place I was told of a case in which a man died of small-pox on the mission estate, and the missionary in charge saw a grave dug, and gave stringent orders as to burial. Shortly afterwards the corpse was discovered near the grave, with large pieces of flesh cut off the thighs and arms. These were picked up not far off wrapped in plaintain leaves; some old women had cut them, but being disturbed by hyænas had run off and left their horrid booty behind.

It is among the Gan' people that the best opportunities occur for satisfying a craving for meat. While the Baganda and Banyoro have many scruples as to what is fit, the Gan' will eat anything that once moved about by its own efforts—birds, beasts, fishes, and some insects. Most Banyoro will not touch fowls, and only those who are near a lake eat fish, but the Gan' have truly comprehensive appetites. The children eat even the kites, which we used to shoot in defence of our fowls; a hyæna I trapped was carried off to the pot in





THRESHING MILLET ; PATIKO.  
(See p. 111.)



WINNOWER MILLET.

The grain is poured from the tray and falls to the ground, while the breeze carries away the chaff.

To face p. 115.

## The Food Supply

triumph, though many said they never ate hyæna or vulture; eggs so nearly chickens that they rattled when shaken, were roasted in the ashes and devoured with relish. Cows that died of the deadly trypanosome were eagerly consumed as if they had died by the axe instead of disease. If vultures were observed to be hovering about in the distant sky, off would run a party of men to see what corpse was attracting them and to bring in any remains there might be, probably of some antelope that had been killed by a lion or died a less violent death. But for their regular meat supplies the Gan' depend on their skill in hunting, which is considerable. Occasionally some one, with a better supply of ammunition than his fellows (there are great numbers of old Snider rifles in the country) will decide to hunt *à la* European, and stalk his game with a gun. He will spend perhaps half a day carefully creeping up to his quarry, as when you have only about a dozen cartridges and no prospect of ever being able to get any more, you do not waste ammunition. Moreover, a worn smooth bore is not accurate as a weapon, and twenty yards is consequently long enough range. To get within twenty yards of wary antelope is not an easy business, and involves much crawling and waiting in the grass, besides extensive and peculiar knowledge of the animal's habits. Hence one can readily understand the feelings of a man whom I disappointed one day. I had spent half an hour stalking a herd of haartebeest and finished up with a very poor shot, when up from

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the grass to my left, quite close to the beast I had fired at, arose a long, naked sportsman, who came up to us unloading his old "gas-pipe" with an aggrieved air, and wanted to know why I had spoilt his shot. He must have been certainly within thirty yards of the antelope, but evidently considered that not close enough. But not many indulge in this expensive form of sport; the regular hunting is done with spears and nets. During the dry season most of the time of the grown men and lads in Patiko is taken up in hunting, and prowess in this direction is considered to be a great help towards getting good wives and plenty of them. Unfortunately the desire to bag something is so keen that even quite baby antelope are speared, much to the reduction of the game supply.

For the purposes of hunting, all the prairie land is divided out among various owners, and each sends round notice of a hunt on his piece when he considers the grass is sufficiently dry. A big crowd then assembles about ten in the morning, nets are set up on stakes along the leeward side of the hill, and the grass fired on the windward. As the terrified antelope rush away from the fire they are speared by the watchful hunters, while those who started the fire follow it up and try to bag any game that may venture to break back through the flames. In this way as many as six or more antelope are killed in one drive, usually of the smaller kinds, the tough haartebeest generally surviving even two or three spear thrusts. Wart



## The Food Supply

hogs are also bagged in this manner, and are valued for their tusks, which are used as hair ornaments, as much as for their flesh.

Besides the regular hunt other methods are employed for killing game ; pits are dug and covered with grass and soil, and snares are set for small animals or birds. A favourite snare for antelope is in the shape of a ring, made of twigs and fibre, the centre being entirely filled with huge thorns turned point inwards, leaving only a small circle in the centre. This is set over a small hole in the ground ; an antelope treading on the ring puts its foot through and is unable to withdraw it owing to the thorns. The animal soon becomes lame enough to be overtaken and speared.

I made the acquaintance of another sort of trap one day out shooting. My tracker sighted a haartebeest some distance off, and we proceeded to stalk it up wind as usual. But it caught sight of us and made off, when to our surprise, after a few strides, down it went on to its nose. This was repeated as often as the beast got going, and the constant falls enabled me to get up close enough for a shot. When we came up to the dead animal the reason of its strange gait was at once apparent ; round one foreleg was the noose of a short piece of strong rope, to the other end of which was attached a short, heavy log, the weight of which threw the beast by pulling its foreleg back. This form of trap is also set over a hole, into which the antelope puts its foot, and the unfortunate animal may be days dragging the log about before

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

some one notices and spears it. In the event of game being speared by another than the owner of the trap, the bulk of the meat is by universal custom taken by the one who set the trap, not by the spearer.

Sometimes hunts are undertaken at great distances, perhaps thirty miles away from home. In this case the hunters depend for food entirely on the game, and, if they kill nothing, may be three days with scarcely anything to eat, going hard all the time. On the other hand, when a kill is made, all set to on the meat forthwith, devouring many tit-bits raw. A particularly tasty ( ? ) morsel is a slice of the liver with a few drops from the gall-bladder squeezed over it, as we might squeeze lemon juice on a pancake.

The Banyoro in some districts are expert hippo hunters, using a harpoon attached to a long rope made of fibre. To this rope a float is tied to indicate the movements of the beast till dead, and the whereabouts of the corpse on the bottom, as dead hippo only rise to the surface some hours after their decease. A dead hippo is perhaps appreciated in Patiko more than anything, except an elephant, on the ground that quantity is always to be preferred to quality in a commodity as scarce as fresh (or otherwise) meat. Its toughness is also considered an advantage, as it takes longer to eat ; this, on the principle of the man who wished he had a giraffe's neck when he ate chocolate, so as " to taste it all the way down." Even the hide of the hippo is eaten, after much stewing,

## The Food Supply

being of a fatty consistency, which makes it useless for sandals ; if worn in following up a hunting fire it would burn and melt.

There are many minor articles of diet which are enjoyed by the Gan' and other tribes. Fish, of course, is much used where it is to be got, and large quantities are dried by riverine and lake peoples for sale in other districts. The lacustrine Bakeni and the people on the Albert Lake make their living entirely by fishing, selling what they do not eat to other tribes in exchange for grain. This dried fish is usually extremely malodorous and very bony. The Bakeni, and, indeed, all fishing tribes, use wicker traps for the bulk of their catching, the women among the Bakeni also fish in the daytime with rod and line. A more interesting method is employed in addition in Patiko. At the beginning of the rainy season as the streams begin to fill, an expedition is organised to some place where there is a wide pool in some stream. Into this pool is poured some concoction of macerated herbs, which, on mixing with the water, seems to in some way intoxicate the fish. These begin to behave in a most foolish manner, lying helpless on the surface of the water, or swimming aimlessly about. The fishermen then descend into the water and either pick them up in their hands or shoot the more active with bows and arrows.

Mushrooms are a much-liked article of diet, either the tiny button mushroom, called *butusi* by the Banyoro, or the larger ones we eat in England. These latter are always said in Patiko to be found

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

along with a tortoise, and I have myself proved the truth of the saying, "Whichever you find first you are sure to come across the other close by"; so I conclude that mushrooms are a favourite article of diet also with tortoises. There seems to be some connection between the button kind and termites; if you are troubled with the depredations of termites on your boxes, furniture, or mats, the Banyoro will tell you, "Wait till they have sowed their mushrooms then they will all vanish"; and, sure enough, sooner or later, where the termite holes in the floor are found, there will spring up a crop of these white fungi and the termites come up there no more. But which is cause and which effect I leave it to the entomologists to tell us.

There are various fruits which are used as light refreshment rather than as regular food by the people of different districts. To the European these are mostly disappointing; for instance, the great orange-coloured fruits of the borassus palms, which grow in immense numbers in some parts of the Gan' country and also in Butuku, are of attractive appearance and have a somewhat promising odour. Encouraged by the native opinion that they are good eating, you taste one, only to discover that the fruit, which is as big as a small melon, consists merely of a thin rind, a layer of fibre, and a huge stone occupying three-quarters or more of the whole bulk. In the fibre there is a little juice, tasting something like dates with a dash of bitter added, but there is *so* little that you very soon think it not worth the labour. The Gan' children are





A MUKENI AND HIS FLOATING GRANARY.

(See p. 104.)



FISH-TRAPS ON LAKE NAGWO.

(See p. 119.)

## The Food Supply

fond of sucking them, first pounding them with a stone to soften the fibrous pulp. There are also wild figs to be had, which are edible, but nothing more, even when stewed with sugar; moreover, it is difficult to gather a ripe one which is not swarming with tiny ants.

I have nothing but praise for the cherry-like fruit the Baganda call *nsale*, which is eagerly consumed by natives wherever it is found; and there is a fruit with a similar flavour found in large quantities in Patiko and some parts of the Teso country. This fruit grows on a large tree, with bark strangely divided into cubes so regular as to look almost artificial; the fruit itself resembles a large pale green plum in appearance; inside a thickish rind is a small layer of transparent white pulp, enclosing the usual huge stone, which seems characteristic of African wild fruit. A small blackish purple fruit, growing on a trailing plant, is sometimes met with in Patiko, and tastes like a sloe; another similar berry is found on large bushes in Bunyoro. The fruit of the wild plain-tain looks for all the world like the things sold in sweet-shops under the name of bananas, and really tastes very similar too.

On the whole the indigenous fruits of this part of Africa can hardly be considered a success beside the imported tropical fruits, which are at once appreciated by the natives.

One word must be added about that most valued of all food sources, the cow, so universally kept, though not always mainly for its milk. Among the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

cattle tribes *par excellence*, such as the Bahuma, no part or product of the animal is neglected or allowed to run to waste. This is so literally true that the resulting practices are such as cannot be described in print. And strange notions prevail as to the knowingness of cows as to the disposition of their milk; one gets quite used to being told by one's cow-herd such fables as that a certain cow refuses to be milked any more because you have been boiling the milk! Or you may have a visit to beg for medicine for a certain heifer, which is about to produce her first calf, in order to insure the calf being a female one. The villanies of the cow-herds in Uganda take the place of the weather as the last resort in a languishing conversation, as every one has a story to tell of their ways and thieving propensities.

In other tribes the cow is not so much a food-producer, as a species of self-multiplying currency for the barter of wives. When I left Patiko on furlough it was remarked to me, "Of course you will take your cows?" "What for?" "Why, are not you going home to get married?" I denied the soft impeachment, but without avail. The idea of a young bachelor with a good herd delaying to get a stock of wives was too absurd. When at length they saw that the cows were really left behind, they fell back on the supposition that my father in England was a rich man and would supply the cattle necessary for the wives they were certain I was going home to fetch.

Still the milk is not by any means despised as



## The Food Supply

an article of diet among the Gan', only it must be "ripe." It is invariably kept till it is more or less solid, and then drunk out of large gourds. Once when I halted in a village a great bowl of this stuff was brought to me as a present; I naturally handed it on to my hunters, who soon finished it up. I made a wry face at them and asked if it was really nice? "No," they replied, "not very; it is only three days old, and not sour enough!"

The mental attitude of the average native towards European meals is one of qualified approval; the method of cooking is matter for admiration mixed with the regret that the African has not the means to afford the butter and other ingredients required, while appreciation of foods peculiarly European depends on the catholicity of taste in native foods. A Gan' boy will eat and relish anything he sees his employer eat, and therefore knows cannot be poisonous. But a Munyamwenge is suspicious and cautious in the extreme; whatever he has seen growing, such as beetroot or carrot, he will eat and enjoy whether cooked or raw, but offer him anything out of a tin and he will not touch it. He will marvel at the possibility of meat being still good after months in the storeroom; he appreciates the advantage of always eating the food you are accustomed to, especially if he happen to be living in some district where he himself is unable to obtain his favourite viands. But with few exceptions he firmly declines to touch tinned eatables; sugar is liked, though not so much as a pinch of salt, and biscuits are sometimes appreciated, but

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the only preserved food never refused is jam. This is doubtless because it is made of fruit, which may be seen growing, and sugar, which is known to be the produce of the familiar cane. So fond do some chiefs become of jam and biscuits, that they run heavily into debt at the Indian shops through indulging beyond their means.

Although eating many things with, to us, a nauseous smell, we found that our Banyamwenge boys would never touch cheese or cabbage, and, indeed, expressed wonder that we could eat what made so nasty a smell in cooking as the cabbage, though they had themselves cut it in the garden. Anything involving eggs also roused their disgust, as, for instance, cake; it was not till after much persuasion that the King of Toro consented to give eggs to his children for breakfast when he had asked advice as to improving their physique.

The greatest defect of all in our meals to the African is that there is not nearly enough; quantity, not quality, is what appeals to him, and I have often heard it said that "Europeans do not know how to eat!" The native expects to literally *feel* full after a good meal, and no worse disgrace could be incurred by a host than to let his guests go away capable of eating another mouthful. The correct condition at the conclusion of a feast was accurately and graphically described by a chief at a native reception to celebrate a European wedding: "Okwongera okufa!" he exclaimed ("Another morsel would be death!").

## CHAPTER VIII

### LANGUAGE

"It was neither Hindustani, French, nor Coptics ;  
It was odds and ends, and leavings of the same,  
Translated by a stick (which is really half the trick)."  
RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE class of Britishers that believe in the sovereign virtues of the English language for use in all quarters of the globe is a numerous one, and we are not free from the genus in the Uganda Protectorate. We have occasional visitors who think that if only they use a sufficiency of gesture and vigorous expressions no native has any business to misunderstand them, and if in addition a gun is pointed at the unfortunate's head, why, what further excuse can he possibly have for declining to give all information requested? There is also a numerous class of residents who believe in acquiring a minimum of any given dialect, trusting to physical arguments when speech fails them. And indeed it is not to be denied that the argument *ad hominem* (in a new sense) is often the only one that a black man understands, and therefore one not to be despised by even a missionary, provided he is quite sure he is in the right, and not merely misunderstanding the boy who appears to

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

be deliberately defying him. Other people attain a higher level and converse more or less fluently with all and sundry in their own language, though it must be confessed that only too often the English can be seen shining through the chinks in the idiom. Yet there is no doubt that the only way to deal successfully with the native races is to learn to talk to them as they talk to one another ; no greater compliment can be paid a European than to be called a Muganda, a Lagan', &c. Only by overhearing conversation can idiom be learnt, because no native can explain to you his own language ; and no amount of study in books will ever bring the native turn of expression, and eliminate the European point of view. There's the rub !—the point of view. In order to understand you must entirely reverse your way of thinking on almost every subject. You can never be sure what a black man will say about a thing, and often he will make the remark you least expect. I once showed a looking-glass to a young fellow up in Patiko, who had never looked at his own reflection before, and after a moment's contemplation he exclaimed : "*Laka tar twatwal!*" i.e., "How white my teeth are!" On another occasion I had a big crowd listening to my phonograph, and as the piece was a record of one of their own songs, attention was close and appreciation very evident. So I inquired of one man who was sitting just in front of the machine what he thought of it and was rather staggered to receive the reply, "I can see my face in the trumpet!"





"LAKA TAR TWATWAL!"  
(See p. 126.)



TESO BOYS. (See p. 195.)

## Language

One of my boys accompanied us up to the glacier on Ruwenzori, while the rest preferred the comfortable warmth of the camp-fire. At one stage of the climb we had to pass over ground consisting of soft mossy peat, saturated with icy water. The boy, a Muganda, was heard to frequently groan as if in pain, and when asked what was the matter replied, “ *Ebigere bivunze, ebigere bivunze!* ” i.e., “ My feet are rotten, my feet are rotten ! ” The numbness of cold he had never experienced before, and had no expression for it. When he saw snow for the first time he was enraptured at the sight and produced from the pocket of his coat an old cocoa tin. This he proceeded to fill with snow to take home to his wife, and he was quite disappointed to find that snow would not keep in a warmer temperature. A man in Butiti once asked me why snow was not collected and used for some purpose, and he suggested that being white it might do for the manufacture of rupees !

Having carefully adjusted yourself to the point of view, and prepared yourself for unexpected turns of thought, your next difficulty will be found in the fact that none of the words exactly correspond to English ones, and the words you want most have probably no equivalent at all in the language to be studied. So it frequently happens that the same word will be given to you for two ideas apparently quite inconsistent, and it is only after collecting many instances of the use of the word that at last the main underlying meaning becomes apparent. The student of a new unwritten language must also

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

be prepared to be constantly told that "there is no word for so-and-so" in the vocabulary. I well remember the long and fruitless search I had with my interpreter up in Patiko for the equivalent of the word "repent." We at last gave up the search, though, as may be supposed, with much reluctance in the case of a word so important in translating the Bible. But some weeks later the interpreter brought me the word we wanted. The day before he had caught his puppy stealing a piece of meat, and of course gave it the usual generous chastisement. A young fellow standing by (as far as I remember the gentleman who so admired his teeth, by name Oryem) interposed with "*Weke, don' n'ut*," which means "Let him be, he has repented now." And after further careful inquiry into its use, we joyfully inserted *n'ut* opposite the word "repent" in the vocabulary.

Imagine yourself seated with a pencil and notebook, blank at present, but destined to receive your first impressions of some new language not yet reduced to writing. You have one or two members of the tribe sitting by, and if available, some one who speaks the new dialect and also some language you yourself know. A beginning is made with nouns, and as the human body is so handy and, fortunately, the same all the world over, bar colour, the first list of words will probably include nose, ear, mouth, eye, &c. You will find that one word very likely does for arm and hand, another for leg and foot, another for toes and fingers. Your instructors are sure to locate the heart somewhere in the stomach, so beware of confusing the two to-



## Language

gether—it may be with dire results later on. Having catalogued your persons you may proceed to look around the room for objects of which you would like the names, only to find that there is very little in the place for which they have a name at all. Just as you are in the middle of a desperate search for some elusive designation, which you are sure of getting in a moment, one of your so-called helpers will perhaps interrupt the quest with some pointed question as to whether all of you is as white as your face, or as to the particular use of some object in the room strange to him. You worry him back to attention and think you will try some verbs. After a very few additions have been made to the list in the note-book you will find yourself indulging in the most undignified antics in the endeavour to explain the actions intended. And after all your exertions the interpreter may explain to you that he “ knows that word, it means something totally different ! ” Whereupon you conclude that you have had enough for one day, dismiss the boys, much to their relief, and settle down to try what you can make out of the strange collocations of letters which you have inscribed to represent the new words.

As soon as your list of single words has reached respectable proportions, you may proceed to phrases and sentences, and your difficulties increase in proportion to the length and complexity of the expressions you endeavour to put on record. It may seem an easy matter to tell verbs from adjectives or nouns from prepositions, but when it is remem-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

bered that there are no names for the parts of speech even in the most developed dialect, and that what is one part of speech in English may be another in the strange language, that words may be omitted or united two into one, or the whole structure of the clause changed so that no one word corresponds with one in the English—then it will be understood that it is not easy to catalogue words under their right names. Your interpreter may, moreover, be relied upon to mislead you from time to time by translating word for word out of his own language phrases which have no equivalent or are differently expressed in the new dialect. One of the hymns we are using in Teso is a translation of “Jesus loves me,” in which occurs the line (in Teso) “He told us so Himself.” But in the first version used of the lines what we were singing actually meant “He is talking to Himself,” the chief fault being in the order of the words.

I narrowly escaped an absurd mistake in translating the phrase in St. Mark’s Gospel, “Take up thy bed and walk,” into the Teso dialect. The Teso for the most part spend the night on a raised mud platform which does duty for a bed, and when I inquired the word for bed the reply was *etuti*, the name of this platform. The mystification which would have resulted if the word had been used in the above verse is evident, but fortunately I discovered in time the exact significance of the word.

Another mistake which nearly crept into our Teso books was in regard to the name for God.

## Language

In the tentative booklet I found in print when I came to the country God<sup>d</sup> was translated by *Aroban'at*, the real meaning of which, as I subsequently discovered, is "hunchback"! How the word came to be given as an equivalent for God I have not ascertained so far.

Other errors may arise through the inability of the interpreter, if inefficient, to pronounce the words you are studying. This is particularly apt to occur in the case of a Muganda trying to speak a Nilotic dialect; in his own, as in all Bantu tongues, every syllable must end in a vowel, hence a Muganda usually, when trying to pronounce unfamiliar words, adds a vowel to each syllable ending in a consonant. A boy of mine once gave a good instance of the absurdity that may arise in this way. He was endeavouring to carry on a conversation in Gan' on the subject of ravenous beasts, including the lion. Now the Gan' for lion is *labwor*; unable to pronounce the final consonant the boy added another *o*, and as *r* between two *o*'s in his own language is always pronounced as *l*, he made the further alteration to suit the rules of his own tongue. Apparently he missed the *w* sound, and the final result in his mouth was *labolo*, the meaning of which in Gan' is a banana plant. So that by following the rules of pronunciation belonging to his own language he made himself discuss the possibility of a member of the caravan being carried off in the night by a banana plant!

Overheard in casual conversation this sort of thing is amusing, but when it occurs so as to

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

lead you astray on a perplexing point of grammar it is, to say the least, annoying.

The best-fitting key to native idiom and thought and the clearest mirror of native custom is to be found in the proverbs so numerous in some African dialects. They form at the same time a fascinating subject of study, if a somewhat difficult one. The proverbs of the Banyoro, for instance, are just as elliptical as our own English ones, and consequently just as hard to understand, even after much explanation. Add to this characteristic the difference in the point of view and the references to native custom implied, and the obscurity of many proverbs will at once be obvious. I once thought that I had got hold of one that would conveniently enforce a moral lesson, and wrote down in my note-book the proverb as follows: "If I eat what is my mother's, that is theft." However, I subsequently discovered that there should be a note of interrogation, "is that theft?" which completely upset the Christian application of the proverb. Many of the proverbs are exact equivalents of well-known English saws, but of course in terms of native life and environment. If you want to warn the hesitator you do not say, "Between two stools you come to the ground," but "He who hunts two (rats) gets left." Cats being a foreign importation there is no "When the cat's away the mice will play," but you may say, "When the master is absent, the frogs climb up the house," this not being a difficult feat in the case of the beehive-shaped hut of Bunyoro.

Or again, the same idea may be expressed



TOUCHING UP THE WAR-PAINT, WITH THE AID OF HIS COMPANION'S LOOKING-GLASS, WHICH  
IS WORN ON THE FOREHEAD.

(See p. 191.)



## Language

in the reverse way as in "Slowly, slowly, got the snail to the well" for "More haste less speed." A version of "A burnt child fears the fire" is seen in "He who is bitten by a snake fears a lizard," the Lunyoro distinctly scoring in point of emphasis. Sometimes there is no doubt about the applicability to Scriptural truths; "Be sure your sin will find you out," is well enforced by "If you burn a house can you conceal the smoke?" while the lesson of the mote and the beam has its counterpart in "Hush your friend's baby when your's is asleep."

The most interesting of the proverbs, if the most difficult to appreciate, are those involving reference to native customs. I well remember the long quest after the point of a proverb which finds its English equivalent in "One swallow does not make a summer." The words run, "*Oruswa ruti Parungu Bunyata orame?*" This takes the palm for ellipsis, the full sense being, "When the first white-ant makes a whirring do you say 'Goodbye, dry-bread?'" To understand this one must first recall the composition of the regular meals partaken of by the Banyoro. They consist of millet porridge or boiled sweet potatoes, with some concoction of boiled herbs, meat, grasshoppers, or white ants as a relish, according to the season. All things edible are divided into two classes, mere food and relishes. The one thing to be avoided is to have to eat, as we should say, *dry bread*, that is either millet or potatoes without any relish. Now we come to the white-ants or termites; at the commencement of

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

each rainy season the superfluous males or drones in each hill fly out from the nests below, and are consumed in vast quantities by birds, monkeys, lizards, and not least, by the people themselves. These last catch the insects by erecting a rough booth over the hill, and digging a hole in the ground in front of which a fire is kindled. The hunter then squats down in front of the fire and keeps up a perpetual tapping on an upturned gourd, whereupon out swarm the drone termites, choke in the smoke and fall into the hole. I once saw some men with several gallons of these *enswa* which they were preparing for sale by boiling them and removing the wings. Now at length we are ready to explain our proverb. One does not chuckle over the supply of relish for one's millet as soon as the first ant flies; you wait till the real swarm begins, or "A strawberry blossom will not sweeten dry bread."

Much less complicated is the reference in "The visitor who has not slept in the house catches the cows that have been already bled." This refers to the custom among the cow-herds of bleeding the cows in the neck in order to obtain blood for drinking, of which they are very fond. I remember this proverb being quoted to a boy, a stranger, who brought my chair back from church one Sunday morning, and put it in the wrong room in the house, not knowing the proper arrangement of the furniture. The average native is a most unobservant person of natural objects unless they are edible, but an occasional proverb shows that



## Language

some at least of his ancestors took an interest in even "useless" creatures. There is a rather pretty proverb based on the habits of a creeping thing known to science, I believe, as the caddis-worm. This little creature builds for itself a tiny log-hut, by weaving into its cocoon morsels of stick, with the result that it appears to have been carefully wrapped up in a sort of cylindrical splint, the whole affair being not more than half an inch long. This insect is called *Akasenyanku*, or "Little firewood collector," and its habitat forms the basis of the proverb "Misfortune never knocks at the door; little firewood collector and his house." That is to say, when I go from home I will carry all my belongings with me, like the insect, so that they may not be stolen.

The African dog is anything but a handsome animal, but it is a familiar figure and provides material for proverbs, owing to its habit of sleeping in the ashes of the fire for the sake of the warmth. One saying points much the same moral as the *Akasenyanku*, viz., the unexpectedness of misfortune. "*Ebimu bifa ntamanyire; embwa ehya omukira*" ("Ill-luck creeps like the fire on a dog's tail").

Illustrations are also provided by proverbs of the (to us) strange point of view of people like the Banyoro, and of their type of thought and character. An entirely niggardly spirit is evidently contemplated as the normal attitude of mind in the saying, "*Atagende aboha ntanda yabyenju*," of which a free rendering is, "Goodbye; have some

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

sweets [bananas] for the journey?" The idea is that if your friend is not going to accompany you on the road, he ties up for you merely ripe bananas which will quickly be finished or spoil, instead of a good supply of millet-flour or a bundle of potatoes, which can be drawn upon from time to time.

The unambitious, wearily fatalistic habit of mind of the majority of Banyoro women, is exhibited by the saying, "*Nukwo mbamanyire; azika nibarora*," "'The old story!' and she orders the coffin." The poor creature has had so many children, and they have all died, that she no longer troubles to try and get them well, but makes preparation for the funeral as soon as one is taken ill. This also throws a lurid light on the terrible infant mortality which is so sad a feature of African life.

The clear insight given by such sayings into native custom is invaluable when disputes have to be settled, and the pioneer missionary is sure to have a good deal of this work to do in his effort to gain the confidence of the people in districts where European justice is not yet known. In the Gan' country quite a lot of time was consumed in trying to adjust various cases or in noting particulars to be handed in at the Government courts. Though the Gan' themselves have no proverbs that I could discover, yet the similarity of all native habits of thought makes Bunyoro proverbs applicable to circumstances in the other district. There is a saying among the Banyoro to the effect that "If disgrace falls on your mother it falls on your

## Language

father's wife"; the meaning is that one wife of a man gets implicated in the fault of her fellow wife. This saying was exemplified in one of the most confusing cases I ever remember hearing. A certain man X had two wives, Y and Z; one harvest-time when all were in the fields together, Y cooked a mess of semsem with poison in it, and gave it to a young man against whom she had a grudge. The young man not being near his home, his relatives were unable to avenge his death at once, but on discovering the identity of the culprit, proceeded to take measures to exact recompense. The feud made slow progress, and in course of time X died, and his two wives returned to their old homes. Y's home was far away in another district, but the father of Z lived not many miles from our station and from the murdered youth's relatives, chief of whom was a man Q. This man was still thirsting for vengeance, and got up a raid on Z's father; he collected a large party of friends and seized a lot of cattle, carrying them off to his own village. Smarting under this manifest injustice, Z's father came along to me to appeal for help; I wrote down details of the case for the information of the nearest Government official, who tried the case and awarded Q a good term of imprisonment, while the cows were all returned. The confusing point in this case was the fact that Q's name was Otor and Y's name was Ator, so that the very closest attention was necessary to follow the details.

But to return to our proverbs; some are the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

concisely put moral of a fable or folk-tale, and much again may be learnt from these tales both of custom and speech.

“Too much confidence lost the frog his tail,” is a warning which does not exhibit native character in a very flattering light, and the origin of the proverb is a tale that the grandmother of all frogs was giving out the tails, and one youngster said to himself, “It’ll be all right, granny is sure to keep me one; I’ll go in the morning.” But when he went in the morning the tails were all gone, whence comes the race of tailless frogs that we see to-day. The saying is now quoted to warn all and sundry that it is wiser to reckon a man to be a rogue till you have proved him to be an honest fellow.

Many of the fables are of great length, and bear a strong resemblance to the tales of Uncle Remus which are now so well known, Wakame the rabbit being in the majority of cases the clever one among the animals. One of the shorter tales runs as follows :—

### *Dramatis Personæ*

Wakame	= The rabbit
Warugo	= The leopard
Wanjoju	= The elephant
Wambogo	= The buffalo
Wamusu	= The edible rat
Wampisi	= The hyæna

One day Wakame was walking along driving before him his ox, when he came to a place where all the animals were gathered together. As he could not get by, he announced that he would



LISTENING TO A LAUGHING-SONG ON THE PHONOGRAPH.

(See pp. 126 and 234.)



## Language

kill his ox and give a feast, but only those who were willing to take part in the preparations would be allowed to partake. First of all Wakame called for a volunteer to do the butchering; up jumps Wampisi and says, "I'm a first-rate hand at cutting up meat." "Very well," says Wakame, "only you must not touch a scrap of meat or lick up a drop of blood." Warugo next applied for a job. "You can go and cut leaves from the plaintains to spread out the meat on, but you must not cut any that have a tear in them." Wambogo is next told that he can go and draw water from the well, for which purpose he is provided with a large open basket. When Wamusu asks to do his share he is told he may go and cut reeds, "but mind you only bring those which have no knot in them." Finally comes Wanjoju: "What can I do?" "You can go and gather firewood to cook the meat, but you must on no account bring a piece that is broken." All depart on their errands, Wakame gives exact instructions to Wampisi as to how the meat is to be cut up and laid out and then goes to rest under a bush. Still he keeps his weather eye open, and soon catches Wampisi, after a stealthy look all round, having a taste of the meat. Up he jumps: "No meat for you, Wampisi; you are stealing, when I told you not." Just then Wamusu returns from his errand; "I can't find any reeds such as you want; they have all got knots in!" "No meat for you then!" The next to come back is Warugo, without the plaintain leaves he had been sent to cut. "There is not a leaf in the garden

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

that is not torn." So he likewise is ruled out. Wanjoju joins the party with a similar tale of failure, and Wambogo follows with his basket as empty as when he started. "You have all failed to carry out your orders," says Wakame, "so of course none of you are entitled to any meat." Thus he saved his bacon after all.

The point of the story is the cleverness of the Rabbit in inventing errands for all that could not be carried out; just as you cannot draw water in a sieve, so you cannot collect dry sticks without breaking them off from the trees, while reeds all grow like bamboos with knots at regular intervals. The leaves of the plaintain are torn to strips by the wind as soon as they uncurl from the centre of the stem.

Some of the fables appear to have no particular conclusion, but may be prolonged according to the fancy of the narrator. Of these is one which tells the history of a kind of Old Man of the Sea, who could not be got rid of.

There was once an old man who had only one eye, one ear, one leg, one arm, and one bull, and he took his bull to live up on the top of a hill. Soon after some Bahuma came with their herds and built a kraal at the base of the hill, and the head of the village told his son on no account to take the cattle up the hill to feed. For a long time he was very careful to keep them in the plain, but one day in some very hot weather he went to sleep under a bush, and woke to find the herd already at the top of the hill. He followed



## Language

them and found the old man, whose name was Ruhembeduhakuka, standing there with his bull. "How do you come here, where no one has been before?" "I've come after my cows." "Well, now you have come, in the morning you must bring me some milk." So he took his cows home, and when he told his father he had been to the top of the hill, the father said, "My son, you have brought me sorrow." In the morning he took up the milk to old One-eye, who, having drunk it, said, "I'll come to your place; at dawn you will see me at the gate." Sure enough, there he was next morning with his bull. "I've only come for you to bury me; there is nothing else I want." The head Muhuma well abuses his son for all the trouble to which he has put them, then collects all his people and after working hard from dawn till 2 p.m., they bury old One-eye and his bull. But in the morning they find him again warming his hands at the fire in the kraal, with his bull beside him. "You have not buried me deep enough; dig again." So more people still are assembled and they dig all day and bury both. In the morning he is back again at the fire, bull and all. Once more they dig deeper still, and once more the old pest is ready in the morning for his drink of milk. Burying a day's march off is no better, so they take him many days away to a lake and throw him in. All to no purpose.

The various expedients resorted to to abolish old One-eye are made material for the exercise of the imagination of the narrator, but the end

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

is never reached by the final extinction of him and his bull.

In the same way the mind may be exercised in another tale upon the efforts to escape of Wambogo and his child, which, however, are brought to a successful termination by the cleverness of Brer Rabbit. The young buffalo has broken the lion's best basin, and in terror of their lives he and his father seek safety in flight. As they look for a hiding-place they come across Wamusu (the edible rat); he bids them stay with him, and he and his brothers will soon drive away the lion with their sharp teeth, which cut the reeds. But when the lion heaves in sight Wamusu thinks better of it and bids Wambogo and his son move on. Next they find a herd of *mpalaki*, or cobus cob, who offer the defence of their sharp horns, but are equally diffident when the lion appears. In succession the elephant and other buffaloes offer the aid of their strength and natural weapons, but draw back at the critical moment, and the tale is prolonged according to the ability and ingenuity of the teller in thinking of ways in which various animals might be able to repel the lion. Finally the rabbit, Wakame, comes to the rescue with a clever plot, which he carries out in his cave, showing faked evidence to the lion of the death of his quarry in the form of blood, brains (for which he uses curdled milk), and hides, after which the lion is induced to abandon his quest for vengeance.

The Teso people also have fables, and ascribe the most intelligence to Iculi, the weasel, who in

## Language

one tale produces water by stamping after all others have failed. Another story is interesting in showing how the want of implements is supplied by the use of natural objects. The yarn begins with a cannibal episode, in which a woman kills and cooks her mother-in-law and gives it to her relatives to eat. Fearful of the consequences of her act, which is detected by a blind man, she flees away and at the first village she comes to has an axe thrown at her. Picking it up she continues her travels, which then provide a series of incidents, in which she always exchanges what she carries for some object given in gratitude. Her axe goes to a man whom she finds chopping honeycomb out of a dead tree with an ox-rib. The honey goes to children eating sand, who give her an egg, which is passed on to an ostrich rolling along a stone. An ostrich plume, a palm pole, and an ox figure successively in the next transactions, out of which she brings a razor; this is given to a man who is trying to shave his children with a pot-sherd, because his razor is all used up; the spear-head received in exchange is welcomed by men who are trying to cut up their meat with strips of reed grass. And so on and so forth.

It is in hearing such fables and proverbs over the camp-fire when on a journey that one learns best the true idiom of a language. At other times one can never be sure that the boys are not talking "down" to the comprehension of their master, adapting their phrases to his lack of knowledge, and even making use of his false idioms in the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

desire to be perfectly understood. In matters concerning the work about the house, the presence everywhere of foreign objects necessitates the use of foreign words ; in religious work the introduction of totally strange ideas leads to the employment of words in unnatural senses. But in the telling of fables and the easy converse of the camp-fire all artificiality vanishes, and the student may drink of the well of idiom undefiled.

At such times, too, the missionary or traveller passes or fails in his language examination more than when he sits at a table to answer questions. His ability to understand a rapidly related story or to appreciate the point of a telling proverb is a test second to none of fitness for his work in this respect. Perhaps the most searching test of all is to make a successful examination of an old heathen woman's ailments in the dispensary. If she answers his first question intelligently, with evident understanding of what he has said, and does not appeal to the dispensary boy to interpret what she imagines to be another language than her own, then the missionary may congratulate himself that he knows at any rate how to pronounce in that dialect.

"But first you must master their language, their dialect, proverbs, and songs,

Don't trust any clerk to interpret, when they come with the tale of their wrongs.

Let them know that you know what they're saying, let them feel that you know what to say :

Yes, even when you want to go hunting, hear them out if it takes you all day."

RUDYARD KIPLING.





A CHRISTIAN WEDDING AT BUTITI, MWENGE.  
The bride and bridegroom are under the white umbrella.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIAL LIFE

“Four things greater than all things are—  
Women and Horses and Power and War.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

IT used to be commonly stated at one time that naked peoples were much more moral than tribes that wore clothes. This theory, unfortunately, will not hold water when the matter is investigated at close quarters. It should rather be said that there is an absence of all morality than an absence of immorality; these naked tribes are for the most part purely animal, devoid of all self-consciousness, destitute of all sense of indecency or what we should call modesty, and regarding sexual matters in the same casual, unaffected way as we might regard questions of diet. Among Bantu tribes in Uganda there is a strong sense of outward decency and propriety, which but serves to cloak complete indifference to the higher claims of morality; in private the scrupulous Bantu is often no more moral than his frankly animal, primitive Nilotic or Teso neighbour. In spite of the importance of marriage and the efforts expended by many on acquiring the wherewithal to get a wife, there is no semblance

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of home life among Bantus ; the wife is a mere chattel, to be acquired at considerable expense, and therefore to be made as profitable an investment as possible.

The coming of civilisation and the introduction of commercial methods into life and labour systems have already begun to change all this among the Baganda. A man no longer looks to his wife necessarily to provide him with food ; he earns high wages at skilled labour very often and buys his food in the open market. If he has a house of his own, he is constantly called upon for labour for Government or chief, and has little time to develop his estate ; whereas if he works in a factory and lives as a lodger he is safe from being impressed as a porter or to work on the roads. His wages, too, are higher, and he is not obliged to go out of his own country or endanger his life in insanitary camping-places. So there is an increasing tendency to avoid marriage, with lamentable results upon general morality and the tribal birth-rate. The native Government has made great efforts to combat this tendency in the interests of national life and purity, but it is a difficult problem, being largely the natural outcome of the Europeanising of the conditions of life and the decay of the old feudal system.

Among the less civilised Bantu races this question has not yet become acute ; marriage is still the rule of life, there being as yet little opportunity for fixed work at regular wages. Woman is still the main provider of the family sustenance by her



## Social Life

labour in the fields, and is regarded as an inferior being. In Mwenge, for instance, no woman ever dreams of walking with her husband in public, of eating until he has finished, or joining with him in conversation with his male visitors. The Christian religion is doing much to weaken these prejudices, but so long, at any rate, as I was living in the country of Mwenge very few had freed themselves from the trammels of immemorial usage in these respects.

Among the Nilotic and other non-Bantu tribes things are very different, the women being practically on an equality with the men, except occasionally when they rise to the height of henpecking their husbands! Pretty little family scenes are to be met with in Patiko, parents sitting playing with their children, whole families seated at a meal together or picnicing out in the fields in the intervals of digging and weeding. At the great dances, which are the chief relaxations of the Gan' tribe, the girls and women take part along with the men, sometimes dancing in little groups by themselves, but often attaching themselves in threes or fours to some gorgeous warrior and following him round in the mazes of the "figure." At less formal and less pleasing small dances, held impromptu by a single village, I have seen women take part by carrying gourds of beer round to the men as they dance, and hold the drink to their lips while their staggering feet keep an unsteady hold on the measure of the accompanying chant.

One main feature of this equality of the sexes,

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

it may be cause or it may be effect, is the fact that the men do the bulk of the hard work in cultivation. In Buganda, with its regular rainfall and never-failing fertility, a minimum of labour is required to keep a household in food, when once a garden has begun to yield its regular crop of bananas ; so the wife is able to make both ends meet with but a few hours a day in the fields. In the more rigorous task of growing grain crops, which need fresh land each season, and when reaped need constant labour in storing and preparing for consumption, no woman could possibly succeed unaided. The wife finds ample employment for her time in winnowing, threshing, washing, and grinding the corn, to say nothing of cooking the meals and preparing frequent brews of beer. So whether of choice or of necessity the husband must do most of the cultivation himself, with all the help he can get from his sons as soon as ever they are tall enough to wield a hoe or carry a heap of weeds to the bonfire. When he is approaching marriageable age a young man is careful to make his patches of corn as big as possible in order that he may gain a good reputation as a cultivator ; otherwise he will find his chances of getting a good wife but poor. What woman would care to marry a man who is not good for an acre of this or a half-acre of that ? Do I want to die of hunger, she would say, or be shamed by not having anything to give my guests when they come to visit me ? Prowess in hunting is another primary consideration in choosing a husband among the Gan'

## Social Life

girls. A youth who cannot throw a spear straight or overtake a wounded antelope or follow a trail without being misled by old tracks crossing and re-crossing is not likely often to contribute meat to the larder. Am I always to eat plain porridge, the girl might remark, when proposed to? Don't I like to eat meat as much as any one else? Whereas a man with a reputation as a clever hunter can take his pick any day of all the girls in the district. I remember once when we were returning from an unusually successful shoot one of my gun-bearers, a youth named Odon'pin, remarked to me that my wife would say to me on my arrival home, "*Ini lacor tin*," i.e., "You are a man *indeed* to-day." He imagined that nothing could give a wife greater pleasure than to see an unlimited stock of fresh meat brought in.

The prevalence of polygamy, too, among these Nilotic tribes is not unconnected with this equality of the sexes. Of course, the ideas of wealth in the possession of many wives and the rearing of a large family are important considerations, but the women themselves have to be considered too. When a man becomes a Christian and faces the question of monogamy, he has not only to make up his own mind on the point but also to gain the consent of his wife. Will she be willing to forego the assistance of additional wives? She looks to her husband to grow large crops of foodstuffs, and also to provide her with help in the preparing of it. Especially if there are visitors, a single wife is handicapped by having to do all the cooking

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

herself, whereas if there are several wives each can take a share and send up one or more dishes to the feast. Hence in Patiko we often found that the men were quite willing to come to church and learn to read, and also to allow their children to come in the intervals of herding goats and cows. But the women were for the most part bitterly opposed to all teaching that involved monogamy. Are there men enough to marry all the women if they only marry one each? they would argue (the female being much in excess of the male population, as in many communities). Are we always to do all the work with no one to help us?

Hence much of the interest in life centres round the question of getting married, as it does in England very often, though the considerations to be weighed are so very diverse. One of the prime requisites in a wife in Africa is that she should be obedient and not what the Baganda call *mulalu*, or mad—that is to say, one who is uncertain in temper, impatient of control, and therefore likely to cause trouble. Such a wife may refuse to cook the meals, go off visiting when she ought to be at work, decline to allow the husband access to the food supplies, and make things generally uncomfortable. If prowess and industry are the prime requisites in a husband, then a pliant temper is the sovereign virtue in a wife.

The free love which is countenanced and even encouraged quite openly among the girls and young men of the Masai tribe is less openly practised among the Gan' and Teso peoples. It is supposed





A SHAM FIGHT IN PATIKO,

## Social Life

to be an offence for a young man to commit immorality with an unmarried girl, but in reality the offence is only treated as an excuse to extort fees from the delinquent. In the Teso country immorality is even said to be encouraged by some parents for the sake of what can be made out of it. Want of chastity is never considered any drawback to a marriage, and is indeed regarded as the normal condition of affairs. The young men among the Gan' are fond of going off for a week at a time on a visit to some friends or other to, as they would say, *cono añira*. In bald English this might be rendered "flirt," but often it means far more than this. The custom is so far recognised that there is a regular scale of payments due to the father, varying according to whether the man desires to marry the girl or not.

In the case of a regular marriage the amount due to the father varies in accordance with the sex of the first child born, a girl being considered of less value than a boy. The payments among the Gan' consist of cattle, sheep, hoes, spears perhaps, and sometimes other useful articles. The final payments are often not completed until years after the marriage takes place, and the bridegroom is considered fair prey by all the bride's relations. This results in endless disputes; payments made are often repudiated by the recipient; the amount agreed upon is constantly matter for argument, and argument ends in fighting, raids on one another, and sometimes a long-drawn-out feud. When asked to settle a dispute one takes it for granted that the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

question is one of marriage payments, unless specially informed otherwise.

Wives may also be acquired in other ways than by the normal method of purchase. Big chiefs have many more wives than they actually marry themselves, and these are bequeathed to their sons after them along with the other property. Sometimes it may happen that a younger son inherits a wife much older than himself, in which case he may arrange with his brother to exchange for a younger woman, the elder brother then marrying the older woman. One of the most important Gan' chiefs, by name Ogwok, had a great number of wives of all ages; I was told that there were at least eighty, and I doubt if he knew himself how many children he had. He was constantly acquiring more wives, being very wealthy in cattle, but most of these were for his sons, who were naturally numerous, and many of them already grown up. In some districts girls are betrothed in infancy by the parents in order to secure the cattle or goats at once; if the child dies, there is, of course, unlimited litigation before the prospective bridegroom can recover his property. It is even said that a man will barter away his unborn child on the understanding that if it should prove to be a boy the payments made shall be returned.

Among the Gan' and Teso people there is but little ceremony to celebrate a heathen wedding, but the Banyoro made much of the occasion even before they learned Christian usage. The bridegroom



## Social Life

(wrapped in a new barkcloth, his head freshly shaved) sits in his house, which has been swept and spread with clean grass. The friends whom he has invited to the wedding go meanwhile to the home of the bride as if to make an informal call, and are entertained with beer and coffee berries. At nightfall the bride's girl friends take down from the roof of the house all the things which have been given to her to take to her new home, her barkcloths, knife, and any other little personal article she may have. The young men next prefer the request to the father that they may be allowed to take the girl away, and he accordingly hands her over to their care. The bride is carried on the backs of these "best men" to her new home, where she is met by the lady guests and received into the house. All this time she must remain with her face bent down, and it is correct to look as miserable as possible. Her wedding breakfast consists of button mushrooms and other delicacies, after partaking of which she retires to the back part of the house, in company with an aunt; it is most important that she should retire before a hyæna or jackal is heard to howl. The bride having departed, refreshments are served to the other guests, and beer-drinking and smoking are continued till morning dawns. When it is full daylight a meal is served and the father's presents to the bride are brought out for inspection, after which the ceremony is at an end. The aunt remains with the bride for some three days to settle her into her home and help her with her duties; on leaving

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the aunt must receive presents for her kindness and trouble.

These nocturnal marriages are rapidly becoming a thing of the past, as Christians become more numerous, and enlightened ideas gain currency. But the old ceremonies have left their mark on the newer customs, especially in one respect. It is still the correct thing for the bride to walk as slowly and look as sad as she possibly can, and the custom of seclusion for some days after the wedding is adhered to.

After the desire to get comfortably married, perhaps the master passion of an African's life is to acquire a position of some authority. The height of his ambition is to be made a chief, and meanwhile he will lord it over any one to whom he is in a position to dictate on any matter whatsoever. Among the Bantu tribes of Uganda there is a deep-rooted reverence for the powers that be; chiefs have almost absolute authority over their dependents, who take their cue in everything from the one in power. The conversion of a chief to Christianity means a movement of all his people in the same direction resulting only too often in a sort of fashionable, follow-my-leader religion, representing but little conviction in the minds of the adherents. The elaborate feudal system of the Baganda has proved capable of adapting itself to more civilised conditions, and of working with extraordinary facility under the British Government.

The main characteristic of the Nilotics is their

## Social Life

independence and contempt of all constituted authority, unless it happens to pull in the direction of their own wishes. In the Patiko district it was notorious that the chiefs had but little control over those who were nominally under their jurisdiction, and the tenure of chieftainships was extremely precarious. If the heir to a chieftainship proved weak and unstable, he soon found himself no more important than his meanest peasant; his villages dropped off one by one to the allegiance of some other better man, until he was left with but his own village for a kingdom. On the other hand, if a strong, able man could get hold of a good large drum, summon large numbers therewith to dances and hunts, prove himself capable in settling knotty points of law and in enforcing compliance with his decisions, he could soon set up as a big chief and gather a goodly band of sub-chiefs and head-men of villages to his councils. The critical point was the acquiring of the drum. I was once appealed to to settle a dispute of long standing about the possession of a drum, which had been stolen from a chief some years before. The drum was not produced, but was said to be old and of no great size, and it was not at first apparent why so much fuss was made about it, as the litigants were sons of the aggressor and aggrieved. It turned out, however, that on gaining possession of the drum, the thief promptly set up a claim to the authority of the previous owner, and posed as chief instead of his rival. When I appealed for witnesses to the case I was naïvely informed that none of those present

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

were even born when the theft took place, so I made no attempt to elucidate so hoary a dispute, and for all I know the thief's posterity still hold the stolen drum and the powers usurped along with it.

The main business of a chief in a district as yet unaffected to any great extent by British administration is the dealing out of justice, or the reverse, to the many disputants who come before him. To the native English methods of pleading at law seem cumbrous in the extreme, while to our ideas African courts are casual and crude. After taking the photograph on p. 157, I sat for a time to hear the business of the court; a case was commenced, and while the parties to the suit knelt before the King and his Katikiro and pleaded with the utmost volubility, the judges carried on a conversation with me in apparent total unconcern and indifference. It was only evident that they heard all that was said, when now and again one would intervene to ask some pertinent question, to the probable confusion of the pleader and the better elucidating of the truth.

The penetration of native chiefs in getting at the truth of a matter is in vivid contrast to the helplessness of the mere white man in the face of the maze of contradictions, irrelevant evidence, and cunning falsehoods that go to make up the hearing of an African case at law. On one occasion in Toro, soon after my arrival in the country, a case of incendiarism puzzled all the Europeans. On the very night after one of the mission-houses





AT THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT.

King Daudi Kasagama of Toro and his Katikiro sitting to hear disputes. The European is Mr. Wilde, the local administrator.

(See p. 156.)

## Social Life

had been struck by lightning and burned to the ground, a second alarm of fire fetched us out of our beds at midnight. The hut occupied by our women cooks was a mass of flames, and in a few minutes reduced to a pile of smoking ashes, beneath which were buried the relics of all the occupants possessed. Next morning investigation was made into the cause of the outbreak, and both the women who had been sleeping in the house were emphatic in asserting that it was the work of an incendiary, as they had carefully extinguished their fire before going to rest. Suspicion pointed to a quondam occupant of the house, who had quarrelled with her fellow cooks and returned to her former home. But there was no evidence against her. Just when all were giving up the case as hopeless the Katikiro came along. He ordered the girl to repeat her story; after two or three sentences he interrupted with a query; a little later came a second sharp interrogation as to the reason of her presence in the place where she was trying to prove an alibi. The flow of voluble self-justification was stayed, and on a third pointed question sputtered to a stop. A minute later the crime was fully confessed.

In native courts no attempt is made to confine attention to one speaker at a time; as soon as the two parties in the case have had their say witnesses are called and may speak one at a time or all together; the litigants will interrupt and contradict, and any spectator who has anything to say interjects it when he thinks well. A favourite method of working out a case is to bring a handful

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of little pieces of stick, and lay them out before the judge in little piles ; one pile of three perhaps is to represent the goats alleged to have been stolen or paid, another heap of five or six the hoes given with the bride ; other piles may stand for spears or cattle or pots, and when all are laid out and explained to the complainant's satisfaction, he leaves them there on the ground and makes way for the defendant. He in his turn gathers up the sticks and arranges them according to his view of the arithmetic in the case, and spectators or witnesses may intervene to alter the numbers or support one side or the other. Although it may appear that confusion worse confounded is the inevitable result, the intervention of bystanders really takes the place of a jury. As the case proceeds, the puzzled European may find wisdom in the comments of the crowd, and by the time all have had their say the issue is often made clear beyond doubt by the light cast on it from remarks made by one and another.

That this system is not merely careless acquiescence in a jumble is made evident by the view held of the functions of a chairman. At a recent meeting of the Synod of the Uganda Church a heated discussion took place on the advisability of giving to the chairman of a certain committee a casting vote. It was clear that the idea of the black members as to voting was far removed from that held by the white section. They could not understand the system of a casting vote, deciding between equally divided parties. A chief in high



## Social Life

office explained to us the African view of a president's functions by reference to their practice in court. "Do we not?" he said, "hear what all have to say on each side and then say which side has the greater reason?" The chairman has to gather the feeling of the meeting and give voice to it.

As in England, litigation is rather expensive. The judge requires his fees, on which he is largely dependent for his regular income, and if an official messenger has to be sent to enforce the decision he also will need to be paid. It is, therefore, seldom worth while to go to law about a thing of small value, or the whole may be absorbed in the costs.

There is no accurate territorial division among the chiefs of the Gan' tribe, single villages often owning allegiance to a chief who lives on the far side of another chief's district. A village may move to a fresh site in a different part of the country, and yet still call itself responsible to its original lord; the resulting confusion tends to minister to the love of independence, the chiefs finding it difficult to exercise control over distant groups or families. The independent spirit occasionally found expression in open contempt for the authority of the British Government. The constant changing of the officials in charge of the district made any continuity in administration impossible; and I have known cases where the chiefs or others have temporised over the paying of taxes or similar matters in the hope that before the question arose

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

again the official concerned would be removed to another district and the whole affair fall through.

Until recently the same anarchic condition of affairs prevailed in the Teso country. A wholesome dread of authority seems to have been first instilled by Semei Kakungulu and his myrmidons, who more or less hammered the people into some sort of order. The district is now well under the control of the British officials ; the commissioners, however, still employ Baganda as agents, to act as instructors to the Teso chiefs themselves, who are the actual executive power. This system answers excellently as a rule, though it is difficult for the Baganda agents to be prevented from lining their own pockets too liberally at the expense of the peasants. It is fairly easy for an agent to work quietly in league with an unscrupulous chief for their mutual profit, and extremely difficult for the English officials to get evidence against them, even if it is pretty certain that malpractices are going on.

The general desire to "boss somebody" is conspicuously seen among the Teso in the plenitude of katikiros, as they are called, following the Luganda usage. Each chief or sub-chief has the appointment of his own subordinates, and these posts are naturally kept as rewards for favourites or specially useful men. But the system of devolution of authority is continued indefinitely in a downward direction, until it is sometimes difficult to find a man who does not profess to be "somebody." A considerable crowd of men will perhaps turn

## Social Life

up to work on a job, the making of a road, the building of a house, or the clearing of an area of jungle. At the head comes the chief, who does no more than walk on the ground and give tone to the proceedings by his presence. The workmen are apportioned their divisions of the job in hand by several sub-chiefs, who will dispute for some time as to the exact proportion due to each. Having argued the matter to a finish, the sub-chiefs leave each a katikiro in charge of their men and retire to discuss the news of the day with the head-chief. These overseers then in turn choose katikiros from the men of each village represented, and apportion certain work to each village. These overseers again will each in all probability have one or two deputies, and as no one who is labelled katikiro expects to do any work himself, except under direct orders from the head-chief or compulsion from a European, the number of ordinary unvarnished labourers left to really work is remarkably small. Only by constant oversight on the part of the Muganda agent or the European missionary is it possible to get any amount of work done in a reasonable time; so many sit and exhort others to work harder instead of giving a hand themselves. As the day goes on and the sun gets hot, fathers will put their boys to work in their places and join the ranks of the "sitters-out"; some who have been at work without demur for an hour or two will appear to recollect that once they were appointed vice-sub-deputy to somebody's under-assistant katikiro, and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

join one of the groups in the shade of a bush or tree ; and at length there will be left half a dozen boys pretending to work, an odd man or so who happens to have got a job that he can sit down at, and two or three workers who would be at work if there were anybody to hand them the needful materials. Devolution having thus had its perfect work, it will be found advisable to consent to an adjournment, and hope for better luck next time.

The lust for a shred of power extends also to the lower ranks of life. If a chief or a European has his staff of boys, why should not each of those boys have a smaller boy to do his dirty work in turn? There are always garments with a few days' wear left in them that will do for wages, and if they fail one can always make unlimited promises which cost nothing at all. And if one is not able to engage a regular servant, it is gratifying to one's pride and importance to have occasional services rendered by a junior in want of some paltry article that you have to dispose of. An amusing case of this sort occurred among the cannibal Bagisu some time back. A lady missionary heard a great uproar among her youthful servants, and on inquiry found that there had been something of a fight between two small urchins, one of whom was intensely indignant with the other. The origin of the dispute was an agreement that had been come to between them, that the younger boy should wash his companion's feet for the period of one month for the payment of one fowl. The weak spot in the compact was that the wages were

## Social Life

to be paid in advance; the prospective servant took his wages, immediately devoured them, and then repudiated all further share in the contract. A Solomon or a Daniel might well be asked to come to judgment on such a matter and decide it with a grave face if he could.

The working of the clan system, which lies at the base of all relationships in all African tribes, has been so fully described by other writers from wide and intimate knowledge that there is no need to do more than mention here the existence and importance of it among the tribes we are dealing with. Its ramifications are so vast as to require separate treatment.

Some points of detail in the daily etiquette of Africans may be interesting; the black man has his "Don't" as well as the white man, though the points emphasised are so totally different. A universal "Don't" is to avoid stepping across the food when it is laid out on the mat or leaves ready for a meal. Your foot may not be near touching anything, but that makes the offence none the less heinous; you have defiled the food and it must be thrown away. Before a meal don't wash your hands only up to the wrist, but go as far as the elbow. When you dip your sop into the gravy or mess of herbs do not scoop up half the contents of the bowl and leave none for anybody else. A point in which Europeans often offend the sense of good manners in some tribes is in failing to give greeting before asking a question or having further conversation. When one is on a bicycle and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

in a hurry it is irksome to dismount and go through an elaborate series of salutations before asking the road to one's destination ; but it is a gross breach of manners to omit some form of greeting at least. The Banyoro consider it bad form to enter a house if the master is outside ; you may be suspected of some sinister motive in doing so. In Teso beware of touching an *asuban*, or spirit offering, or you may find yourself suffering some mysterious evil. A Teso woman must remember never to sit on her husband's chair, nor to squat in the position adopted by men, but always to sit on one heel with the other leg extended in front of her. She must never appear in public without her belt of iron rings, or she may be accused of dabbling in witchcraft. Don't omit to lower the point of your spear when talking to a superior. When preceding your friend or chief along a path do not forget to call his attention to every root, stone, or hole in the way, lest he stumble and people remark that you hate or despise him.

To us many of these rules seem fanciful or foolish, but some of them add much to the pleasure of intercourse and the smoothness of daily life. The observance of points like these will often contribute not a little to the feeling which natives will have towards a European when they say of him, " He is one of us ; he knows our customs."

On the other hand, many points of English etiquette and procedure appear to them essentially absurd. If a white lady accompanies her husband in a visit to a native village, a chair may be brought

## Social Life

for the man, and much astonishment will be evinced when he hands it to his wife. It takes weeks of drilling before a house-boy can be persuaded to remember that ladies are to be served first, even before a gentleman visitor. Equally perplexing are the distinctions between the various sizes and shapes of plates, cups, knives, &c. In the same way the laborious procedure of an English law court is an absolute enigma. The regulations which are intended to safeguard the native in far out-stations merely serve to mystify him and make him suspicious. And some of the situations resulting from the application of rules made to suit civilised conditions in a town like Entebe to raw savages in the wilds of the Nile Province are nothing less than Gilbertian. It was accordingly the rule that the people of this district invariably avoided, if possible, the resort to a Government official; the fact that sometimes a case had to be heard through the medium of as many as three interpreters increased this reluctance, as, indeed, is not to be wondered at. If a chief could not compose a quarrel, resort was had to the missionary by the peaceably disposed, because he knew the language; the more warlike took the matter into their hands and decided their differences by appeal to arms.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

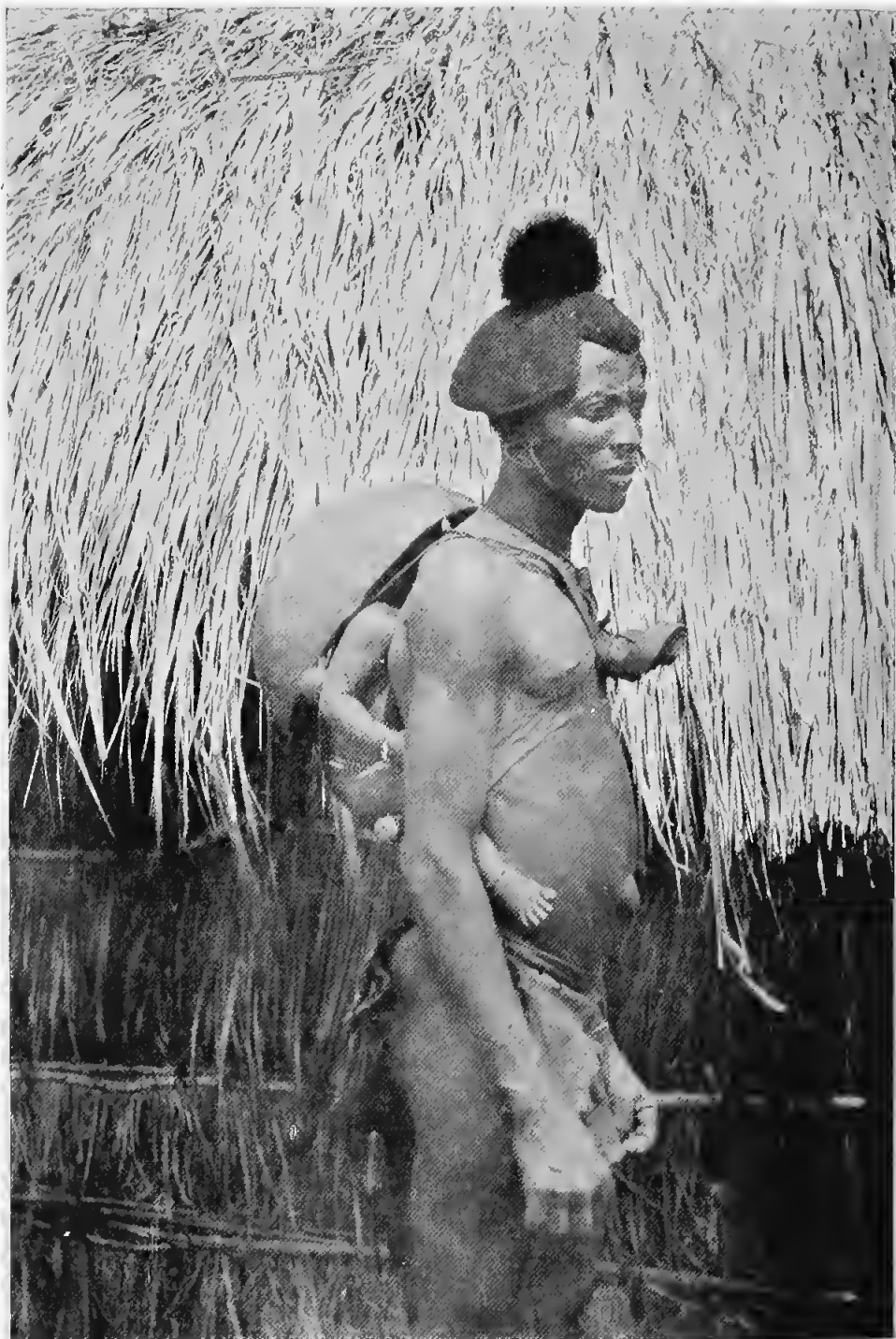
“And the children’s souls, which God is calling sunward  
Spin on blindly in the dark.”

E. B. BROWNING.

THE life of an African child is a constant witness to the practical truth of the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest. The terribly high rate of infant mortality among primitive tribes is sometimes dwelt upon, but when the conditions of life are studied, the marvel is, not that so many die, but rather that any survive. An African baby’s life is a series of miraculous escapes; perhaps if some of the safeguards so elaborately gathered round English children were removed we should see some compensation for a higher death-rate in an improved stamina and physique. It is quite evident that no sickly African baby has the smallest chance of surviving the host of adverse circumstances which surround it on every side. Its worst enemies are without a doubt those of its own household, its mother being perhaps the most formidable of all, as having the maximum of opportunity for doing the wrong thing. I do not pretend to be able to give figures of birth and death rates, but







HAIR HELMET, DECORATED AT THE TOP WITH A POMPOM OF  
OSTRICH FEATHERS.

Note method of carrying the child.

(See pp. 169 and 189.)

## The Survival of the Fittest

I once made the casual acquaintance of an old woman in Patiko who had had ten children, only two of whom had survived, and she was said to be no uncommon example in the district. One baby in Butiti I recollect seeing through all the stages of its brief existence. In the first place I was asked to go and attend the mother when the child was born; it was a poor, feeble infant, but the parents being Christians, they brought it a week or two later to be baptized. I took the service and saw no more of the child for a short time. Then the mother came to the dispensary and asked for medicine for the poor wee thing; I treated it to the best of my ability, but it was evidently not one of the "fittest" that manage to survive, and a day or two afterwards I heard that it was dead. So the poor little body that had made so short and half-hearted a struggle for existence was brought to the church once more, and I performed the last sad offices as I had performed the first.

It is the well-meaning efforts of the relatives which have as much as anything to do with the inability of so many babies to survive the struggle for life. In Patiko the infant's trials begin even before it is born. Hearing a tremendous uproar on one occasion in Aboga's village, which was the nearest one to our house in Patiko, we inquired the reason. Oh, it was nothing wrong, we were informed, they were only engaged in the business of "*kwero añira*." This is the ceremony of initiating young married women into the cares and trials of motherhood, the idea being to harden the

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

yet unborn infant that it may be able to face life with a good constitution. The shrieks and yells were from the unfortunate mother-to-be, who was being driven round the village by her male relatives with blows of sticks and plentiful sousing with cold water. The blows and water are supposed to expel from the child the demons of sickness and cowardice and weakness of every description, but it is hardly surprising after such treatment if many of the infants fail to live beyond a few hours or days.

Having apparently done their best to kill both mother and infant in this way, the next process is to neglect the mother or treat her as foolishly as possible at the time of her confinement. This is rarely allowed to take place in the house ; a small enclosure outside made of grass or leaves and open to the sky is the usual place selected. The sun may be blazing overhead with all its noonday power, or it may be a wet evening, cold and raw ; it may be the middle of the night, with mosquitoes swarming in countless, bloodthirsty hordes on every hand. On the bare ground reclines the mother, or perhaps on a carpet of plaintain leaves ; on the damp, cold earth lies the new-born infant, with not even a rag to cover it, and with the wind whistling may be through the thin grass partition, or with no more to shelter it from the fierce sun than it soon will have to shield it from the buffetings of the cruel world. But survive they do, these brown-red little morsels of humanity, and become the centre of elaborate precautions to avert the malignance of

## The Survival of the Fittest

enemies, real and supposed, human and supernatural. A matter of supreme importance is the safe disposal of the umbilical cord, which in the hands of evilly disposed persons may be a potent source of danger. If the cord is found and burnt by an enemy of the family, the child is bound to die, so the mother is careful to bury it in some obscure place away in the jungle; for any one to be suspected of searching for the hiding-place is tantamount to being suspected of attempted murder. Then the father must be careful, according to belief in Patiko, on no account to cross a stream, or, indeed, any water, for some days after the birth of his child, or dire consequences will ensue. A favourite gun-bearer of mine, by name Opok, once mysteriously declined to join a hunt, and showed such evident reluctance to refuse that I pressed for the reason. He wanted very much to go, but dare not, he said, as his first-born child was but one day old, and he must not cross water, as he would be bound to do in process of a long stalk.

As a child's age increases, so do its dangers. Day by day the mother will swing it by one wrist or one shoulder on to her back, with imminent danger to the joints, and fasten it there with a sling of hide while she goes about her work. The little legs are passed over a short round stick, like a wee trapeze, and the back of the child is supported by the sling of hide, which goes up from the trapeze, passes over the mother's shoulders, and is tied round her body. Over the head of the child a

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

gourd is placed to act as a protection in some degree from the sun. In this position the infant will slumber or cry alternately for hours at a time, while the mother is about her work in the fields. To soothe its cries the mother swings her back from side to side, or jogs herself up and down, without for a moment ceasing her occupation. Sometimes in the greatest heat of the day both mother and child will find some relief in a nap under the nearest bush; if the mother has no time for rest, or if perhaps she is at work on a road under the eye of some energetic head-man, who will allow no one to be slack but himself, then she will leave the child to its own devices in the shelter of a tree; when no tree is handy she must twist and lace together a few handfuls of long grass into a thin screen from the blazing sun. It may be there is another child a year or two older who can be set to mind the baby, but more often the tiny mite is left to take its chance among the biting ants, stinging flies, and other crawling and flying pests, with even in some places the added danger from prowling beasts, that do not respect the rule of confining their hunting to the hours of darkness. Some mothers seem to be utterly callous as to the sufferings of their little ones. On one occasion an infant was brought to my dispensary at Butiti that was tongue-tied; the mother wanted me to snip the skin to allow the tongue free motion. I agreed, and requested her to open the baby's mouth. The youngster objected, so his mother attained her object by sharply flipping his tiny

## The Survival of the Fittest

cheek with her finger until he broke out into a lusty yell of protest and pain. The mother then held him out to me and the little job was soon finished.

But baby is not by any means neglected as to toilet among some peoples. In Patiko great care and much trouble is expended on the morning bath, as depicted in our illustration. Warm water is used, and there is the advantage, from baby's point of view, of there being no soap to get into the eyes. But the after-treatment somewhat spoils the effect of the bath. No sooner has the little dusky body got dry in the hot sun than the next process commences, the smearing of the entire person with red ochre mixed with rancid butter. Head, face, ears, eyes, nose all come in for a share of the gorgeous scarlet mixture, until not a single inch of black skin is visible from top to toe. Lustily yells the infant all the time this process is going on ; when it is finished comes happiness, for now the child is free to crawl about in the dirt to its heart's content, to stuff its mouth with the sweepings of the cow-kraal, to cuddle the dog, mix itself up with the goats and sheep, or get under the feet of the cows as they file out to graze. Why it survives is a standing miracle, one more testimony to the Darwinian principle mentioned above. Perhaps it is reserved for a more terrible fate, falling into one of the numerous fires that are lighted promiscuously about the courtyard and in the houses. Or it may stray, when old enough to walk, outside the village at dusk and

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

be snapped up by a wandering hyæna. It may even be dragged out, almost from its mother's arms, by a hungry leopard, bold enough to brave the fires and thrust aside the wicker door with a stealthy paw. Particularly in Busoga are the children in danger from these beasts, which are very numerous in the district, and have increased both in numbers and daring since famine and sleeping-sickness thinned the population and left larger areas of jungle undisturbed.

Some of the burns brought to us in the Teso country were very bad. The dispensary boy used usually to ask the parent who brought the little patient which it was that was drunk, the father or mother, that the child was so neglected and fell into the fire. It was taken for granted that drunkenness was the cause of the accident, although the parents invariably repudiated with scorn the very idea that they would allow their child to suffer through their own fault. The severity of the cases was usually due to delay in bringing the child for proper treatment. The burn would perhaps be neglected altogether if apparently a slight one; or if extensive the raw area would be covered with a plaster of some sort, a favourite mixture being bullock's blood and cow-dung, with soot and clay as an alternative. The former of these two makes a cake over the injury so tough and clinging that it is almost impossible to remove it without tearing the flesh still further. Sometimes the burn is left with no covering at all, in which case it soon becomes, in the presence of so many flies and so







BABY'S BATH.

(See p. 171.)



DISTRIBUTING MILK TO CHILDREN AT TORO DISPENSARY.

Note the bath towel used as a skirt.

See p. 248.)

## The Survival of the Fittest

much filth, a reeking sore, which eats its way into the limb, even down to the bone. I have had a child brought in with the flesh of its thigh eaten into a hole so large that you could bury a saucer in it, and could see the bone at the bottom. Another had lost the greater part of the skin of the scalp, the burn extending over one eye, fortunately without destroying the sight. Even these severe burns get well wonderfully quickly under rational treatment, and would be no serious matter if they were brought to us at once.

At any stage of its infant life a child may be betrothed by its parents to some other infant or to one many years older than itself. But in the meantime it is expected to make itself useful. There are no Factory Acts, Education Acts, or other checks on child-labour to hamper the parents in their endeavour to save themselves trouble, so as soon as a boy can talk and toddle he has to take his turn with the goats, at first with others, then later on by himself. On a journey he will be expected to carry a waterpot or a roll of mats, or perhaps a chair; a bundle of potatoes or some ears of maize may be bought by the roadside, and he can put them on his head until they are wanted for the family refreshment by the way. As he gets bigger he will be transferred to herding the calves, then to the cattle, and woe betide him if he allows his wilful charges to stray into somebody's potato patch or trample down a promising crop of young corn. In that case the owners will either seize a beast as hostage until some com-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

pensation is paid, or if they cannot catch one in *flagrante delicto* the track of the herd will soon enable them to find out whose cattle have done the damage, and a complaint to the father can be made and if necessary (which it always is) carried to the chief. In either case the youthful herdsman will get a good hiding from his enraged parent. Then it is so easy to forget to watch the sheep while you are practising with your bow and arrows, and to find when you take them home in the evening that there is one short; let that happen once or twice and you feel the weight of your father's or uncle's stick, as the case may be, depending on whose beast happens to be the lost one. One little fellow named Oyor (see group on p. 179) came to us one day and stayed with our boys for several nights; he had lost sheep three days running and dare not face his father. The man's name was Lapir, a decent, kindly fellow enough, and he let the child be until he summoned up courage to return home; the sequel I never heard.

Meanwhile the little sisters have also found employment in helping their mothers. The first job will probably be to carry on the baby head a rolled-up mat or an empty basket. Very soon the girl will be old enough to look after the baby, not much smaller perhaps than herself, and to keep the fire going while mother is busy elsewhere. Quite tiny girls may be seen going to the well with pots to fetch water, the size of the pot gradually increasing with age and strength. Mother will also want help with the firewood, and it is astounding

## The Survival of the Fittest

the weight of wood that mere slips of girls will bring in. In Aboga's village one evening I remarked on the great size of a load of thick sticks which stood leaning up against a house. It was some ten feet long and must have weighed 60 lbs. at least, as it was not easy to lift it off the ground. When a child of perhaps nine or ten years of age was pointed out as the one who had brought it in from the jungle I was incredulous; so her brother proved to me that she could carry it by hoisting it up on to her head and letting me see that she could at any rate carry it round the courtyard.

The next stage in a girl's home education is the initiation into the mysteries of food preparation and beer-brewing, the most important items of her training in the eyes of future possible husbands. There is the threshing, washing, and grinding of the grain to be learnt; the correct consistency for the millet porridge, the method of distilling salt or potash solutions from the ashes of various herbs, the steeping of the coarse, large millet for beer, and the brewing in huge jars at the back of the house; and then the minor items of household accomplishments, the tying of grass for brooms for grain or floors, and similar details. The girls of some tribes have to learn to milk the cows and to hold the calves when required, to clean and smoke the milk-pots, help clean up the kraal and calf-house, and sometimes herd the calves if all the boys are otherwise engaged. Then there will be floors to smear with cow-dung, also

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the insides of baskets and trays for grain. In very dry weather our cow-kraals in Patiko were carefully swept and the dried dung used for fuel; the ashes were then fetched away by the women and girls and water percolated through them to obtain a substitute for salt. At other times fish-traps are fetched out, and women and girls go off in large parties to sweep the wicker troughs through the shallow waters and so catch the tiny fish, too small for rod and line. On a journey or when moving house the women and girls are expected to carry most of the luggage, including the heavy and clumsy beer-jars, water-pots, and baskets of grain. Often it will take days of constant tramping to and from the new site before all is transported; the menfolk are meanwhile occupied in erecting the new huts and granaries. In some districts it is the work of the female part of the family to cut all the grass for thatching, and also to do much of the mudwork on the interior of the walls. In Patiko all the men who came to do mudwork for us on our houses brought with them their wives and sisters and daughters to carry all the water for them, it being beneath the dignity of a man to carry a water-pot.

The training of a girl in her multifarious duties and employments is therefore no small matter, and perhaps it is as well that she should begin young to accustom herself to the idea that her mission in the world is to make things easy and comfortable for her menfolk. But the girls are by no means unhappy. Both in Teso and among the

## The Survival of the Fittest

Gan' people we were always struck by the merry faces of the children, the boys especially, but also the little girls. Though having very little idea of play according to our notions, they make themselves jolly enough in their own fashion when not wanted by their parents ; among the Banyoro the same could not be said of the girls, though the boys have a quite happy life.

For some little time after its birth an African baby is usually nameless ; it would never occur to the parents that it had any use for a name at so early a stage of its existence. The circumstances of the birth will often suggest a name later on, and from the name much may be argued as to the circumstances of the parents at the time. Among the Banyoro the names of the various *bacwezi*, or familiar spirits, are very commonly borne by both boys and girls, such as Dwakaikara (the local "Smith"), Wamara, Kaguju. These names are given perhaps owing to some such circumstances as the following : a woman has been married for some time and had no children. She calls in the aid of the local witch-doctor, or the *mbandwa*, i.e., one with a familiar spirit, who proceeds with the usual pretence of communicating with the beings of another world. Then the *mbandwa*, spitting in the face of her patient, exclaims "*Zara!*" i.e., "Bear." When subsequently the child is born, it receives the name of the particular spirit affected by the *mbandwa* consulted.

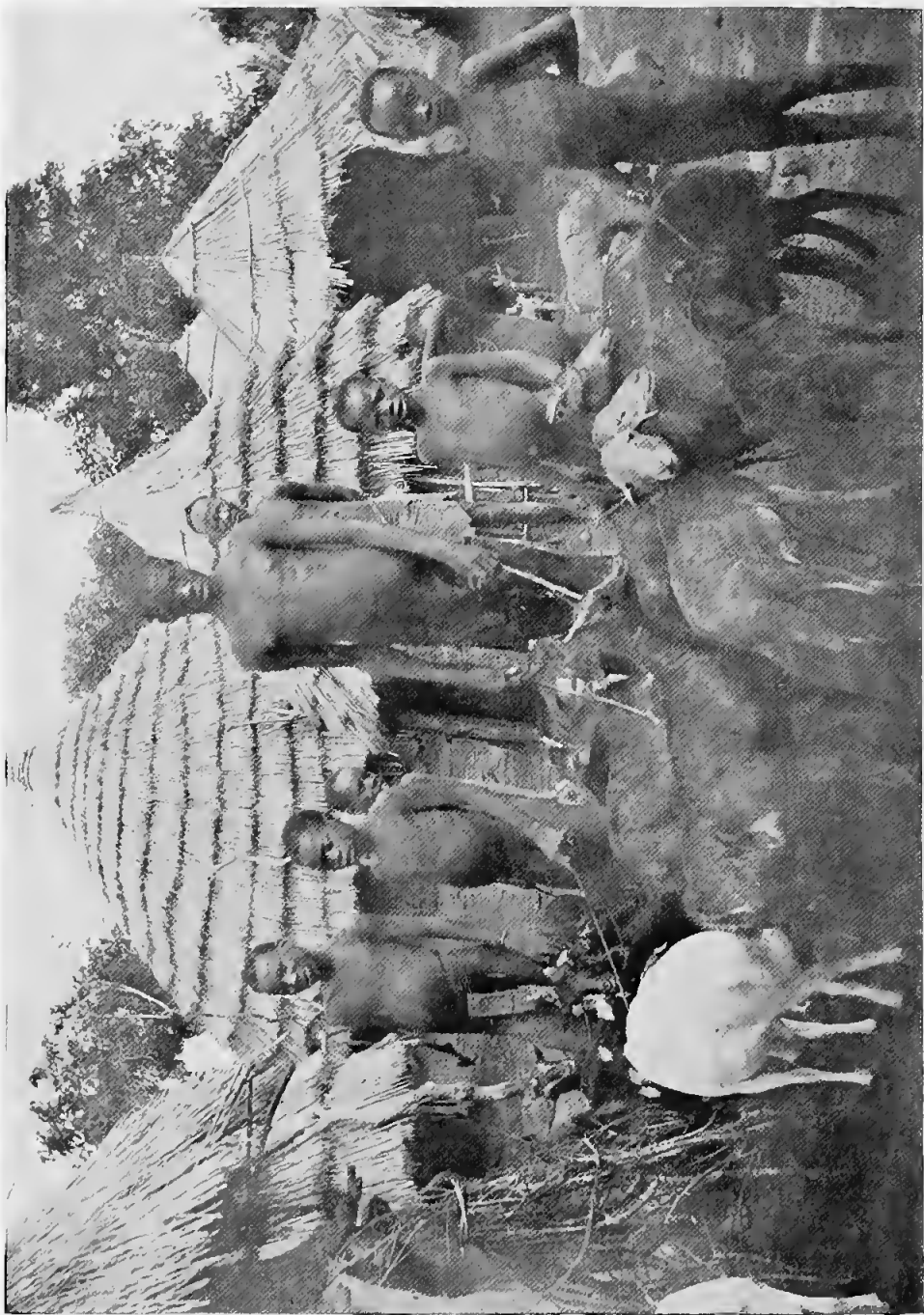
The cook of a colleague of mine rejoiced in the appellation Mukidi ; this I was told would be

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

because at the time of his birth his father had gone off on an expedition to raid the Bakidi tribe, away across the Nile to the east. If the mother has to drink medicine at the time of her confinement, given to her by the native doctor, or *mufumu*, then the child will be named Byabafumu if a boy, or Kabafumu if a girl. The prevalence of infant mortality is emphasised by the frequency with which some names recur. When a boy is named Wempisi, it is usually because several children have been born before and all died, and been exposed to be eaten by the hyænas, *mpisi* being the name of the hyæna in Lunyoro. This seems to have been the regular custom in the case of infants that died at birth, though I have not actually come across cases of it. The spread of Christianity has no doubt caused the practice to be discontinued in most places. Another name given after the death of many previous infants is Kalyegira, also a very common name in Bunyoro. This is from the resigned remark made by the mother, "*Ruhanga alyegira wenka*," i.e., "God's will be done." The name Kaboha appears to be connected with *eboha*, the word for jackal, but in fact it refers to the birth of a child at a time when the parents were packing up to move to some fresh house, the word *boha* meaning to tie up or pack goods. At one time we had a boy in our service whose heathen name was Mpimba, meaning "lift me up"; this seems to indicate that the child did not receive a name until it was old enough to talk a little and made use of this phrase; or it







A HERD OF GOATS AND SHEEP, PATIKO. (See p. 173.)

The child on the right edge of the picture is little Oyor (see p. 181). The tall boy in the centre is now working as a Christian teacher of his own people. His name is Daudi Odon pin.

## The Survival of the Fittest

might have been the mother who was too weak to raise herself and perpetuated the fact in this way.

In the Teso country it is the custom to name a child when the umbilical cord is cut. Once again, as soon as we begin to investigate the significance of names, we find that infant mortality is to the fore in the minds of many parents. Opoloto is a common name, and this is given, like Wempisi, when many previous children have died at birth or soon after. At the same time a fresh doorway is cut in the side of the house for the use of the child; on no account must it be taken through the other, or allowed to use it when old enough to walk. A young white fowl is also selected and carefully kept; when the child gets big this fowl is killed and eaten by father and son together, the white feathers being stuck all round the child's special doorway. By this means it is thought evil will be averted from the child so that it may not suffer the fate of its predecessors. When twins are born, they are commonly named Ebyot and Odon'o or else Opiyo and Odon'o; many rules have to be observed in the case of twins, which are a great rarity, and in some respects dangerous to other people. Some account of these rules will be found on pp. 253 and 265. The name Alibosit, which belonged to our head-boy in the boarding-school at N'ora, is said to be derived from the long trailing shoots of the sweet potato-vine, and to be given to one who is very tall. Cepa, the name of one of the chiefs near to us, denotes a

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

fast walker. Such names are not necessarily given early in life but at any time subsequently, and the original name may be gradually dropped. The chief in whose land we built our station we at first knew as Areko ; later, hearing constant reference made to Ebañat, I inquired who he might be, and it turned out that it was merely Areko's other name, which gradually supplanted the original appellation entirely. One of the sawyers in the picture on page 221 was written in our register as Njala, but that proved to be simply the name of his chief which he had adopted, and he was known to us later as Okwari. Constant confusion was caused both among the workmen and attendants at classes by the fact that nearly every one in Teso has two or three names, which are used indifferently, or worse still, one for a few months, and then another for a few months. So at any time a person you know perfectly well may be referred to by a fresh name, and not till afterwards do you discover that all the time you have been speaking of some one quite familiar. Especially is confusion apt to arise when there is a dispute to be settled, as different witnesses or parties to the case will refer to the same person by different names, occasionally even jumping from one to the other in successive sentences without any warning. The same difficulty occurs in many districts, though I have found the people more fond of changes in Teso than in other parts. In Toro the most confusion was caused by the number of names which might be given to the same place, each man

## The Survival of the Fittest

who passed through and made a map giving a variation, according as his informant happened to tell him the name of the hill, the district, the chieftainship, the chief's name or the underchief's name. One place on the road from Buganda to Toro was notoriously variable on the maps, especially those made by Government officials who spoke through interpreters, and did not always appreciate the significance of the appellation given to them. This place, one of the regular camping-places, and therefore one it was important to identify accurately, used to appear as Kitagweta, the name of the district, as Kitunzi, the name of the chieftainship, Nyama, the chief's own name, and by one or two other names as well, which I fear I have forgotten now.

But we have wandered rather far away from the children and their life. A rather pretty custom is in vogue in Patiko with regard to first-born sons. The mother entirely drops her own name when she bears her first son, and is henceforth known as the "mother of So-and-so," as, for instance, Min Oyor, the "mother of the rat." This woman was one of the wives of Lapir, mentioned above, and mother of the little boy who lost so many sheep. It is considered wiser to give ill-sounding names to children lest the spirits be roused to envy, hence the apparently contemptuous title of "the rat." A sequel of this close association of mother and son in name is the filial observance of obligation to their mothers by the young men of the Gan' tribe. It is considered

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

only right and proper for grown sons to cultivate a piece of ground for their mothers in addition to what they till on their own behalf. I remember our most skilful tracker, Lawotim, once declining to join a hunt, the supremest self-sacrifice to a Gan', because he had not yet finished the plot of land he was clearing for his mother, and the rains were near at hand.

In spite of the extreme dissimilarity of environment and circumstances, it is after all surprising how like African children are to their white brothers and sisters in thought and temper. I have been particularly struck with the way in which boys will be boys in every clime, the same little tricks of temperament appearing under a black skin as under a white. To give two simple illustrations: the famous saying "If Temple is a beast, he is a just beast" might well express the feelings of many a black boy towards his master, as it so graphically described the attitude of the Rugby boy towards the powers that be. No black boy, or man for that matter, bears the smallest grudge for severe treatment, even a thrashing, when he knows that he deserves it, perhaps for deliberate disobedience. But let a master once get a reputation for hasty judgments and unmerited punishments, giving a thrashing to some one and then finding out that he was not the delinquent, and he is henceforth branded as a *mulalu* ("mad" in the Luganda phrase), and will not find it easy to keep house-boys in his service.

Another illustration of the similarity between

## The Survival of the Fittest

black and white boys is the way in which little petty fashions obtain for a time and then drop into oblivion. It may be a phrase which is continually on the lips, probably meaningless in itself, but causing much amusement to the boys and much weariness of the flesh to the master until it is superseded by some other catchword equally futile. My boys at Butiti once got into the habit of ejaculating "*ninsereka?*" i.e., "Do I conceal?" at the end of every sentence in their conversations with one another, and I was reminded of the catchwords that held us in thrall for weeks at a time when I was at school. And the little petty fashions in dress or amusements; at one time a handkerchief worn on the head, at another the trick of wearing the *kanzu*, or tunic, back to front; now a rage for playing draughts all day long to the detriment of work and their mistress's temper, or a fit of imitation spear-throwing. Just such phases of fashion govern English schoolboys; the little ones all go in for tops or marbles, all make paper arrows or play first-class cricket matches on paper; the elder ones must never fasten the bottom waistcoat button, turn down the overcoat collar, or wear a tie of some particular colour.

In the absence of toys, black children, like white, amuse themselves imitating their elders, "pretending" continually. And no better preparation for understanding black children, whether infantile or grown up, could be devised, than a good long apprenticeship among the children of our own land. One of the most supremely important duties

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of the missionary is the training of the young idea, before it is moulded too irrevocably by the tribal habits on lines that have the sanction of immemorial usage, by habits as entirely calculated to produce moral degradation as the physical treatment is to ensure the survival only of the fittest. In some tribes it is considered quite out of the question for parents to bring up their own offspring ; having ruled the household, or at least its mother, for two or three years, the child is not to be expected to learn obedience from her or its father, and so until the age of perhaps six or seven it is handed over to the tender mercies of an aunt or other relative. Not even this degree of consideration for moral training is manifested by more savage tribes who seem to just leave the children to do as they like so long as they do no damage to property and carry out the duties assigned to them in the home. It is one of the lessons learnt with Christianity that parents have a responsibility towards those they have brought into the world.



## CHAPTER XI

### DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

THE extreme scrupulousness of the Baganda in every matter respecting dress and the cleanliness of the person has long been matter for comment on the part of all writers on the country. The strictness of the rules, especially for men, are in striking contrast with the laxity in other districts, every grade of nakedness being observed down to the stage of complete absence of all attempt at personal adornment seen among the Bari. As a rule cleanliness and the wearing of clothes are to some extent associated, as so notably in the habits of the Baganda, but there are exceptions also to this. Even where clothing is reckoned as of the least importance there is some scruple as to the observance of rules of propriety, which, however, contribute but little to decency according to our ideas. An old woman in Patiko dispensary, who had come to have an ulcer dressed in the small of her back, would not consent to remove the belt which suspended her "dress" of string tails, until a young man who belonged to her clan had left the room; the presence of a stranger was apparently im-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

material, and the garment, if such it could be called, was entirely useless as a covering; but the idea of propriety was there, even where no clothing at all was worn.

In the matter of personal adornment, all tribes have a common ground in affecting varied styles of hair-dressing. Among the Banyoro nothing more elaborate is attempted than the shaving of the head in fancy patterns, lines of hair being left across or along the head by young ladies desiring to be fashionable. The men always shave clean over the scalp, but are proud of a beard if they can grow one, which is not often. Very occasionally a particularly hirsute person will contrive to grow a long moustache of more or less European pattern, and that is considered extraordinarily smart, and is always accompanied by a clean-shaven chin.

The Karamojo people like to grow the hair to a great length and gradually form it into a huge mass with clay and cow-dung, until it forms the chignon seen in the photograph on page 187. Something of the same style is seen in Teso, perhaps imitated from their Karamojo neighbours. One old friend of ours, by name Asoñar, was quite a standing joke on the station, as he loved to get his locks, fast turning grey, conglomerated into a mat at the back of his neck; and this mat he used to toss up and down when greeting any one by throwing his head backwards and forwards, grinning with childish glee at the absurd performance. But as a rule clean shaves are the fashion in Teso,





THE KARAMOJO CHIGNON ; THREE VISITORS AT KOLIMON'S VILLAGE,

(See p. 186.)

## Dress and Ornaments

hair on the face being got rid of with especial care, not to say discomfort. We once came across a peculiarly painful hair-dressing operation at N'ora on one of our evening walks. We strolled into a village to chat with the inhabitants, and just inside the gateway found a man extended full length on his back on the bare ground. At his head squatted two of his companions, engaged on the depilation of his chin and cheeks. By them on the ground was a little pile of hot ashes, which served the purpose of soap and water and were rubbed in with the finger. Instead of razors the operators had little pieces of cleft stick; holding open the cleft they would catch up a few hairs, allow the crack to close, and with a sharp jerk pull out the trapped bristles. The plan certainly had the recommendation that it obviated the need for future shaving, but that solitary advantage would hardly be sufficient to commend it to most people, and the shaving-soap makers are not yet likely to lose their trade by competition of the permanent method of shaving.

It is in the Gan' country that hair-dressing reaches its full development as a fine art, not among the women, but among the men, who spend much time on this part of their toilets. The reason for the elaboration seems to be that the mat of hair when well set makes a most convenient base on which to fasten ornaments of various descriptions. Only the young men have these *coiffures*; when a man has two or three wives and a family, he settles down to more sober ways.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

The way in which the hair is treated is seen in the picture on page 193. The front of the scalp is shaved carefully and regularly, while a circle of hair is left growing at the back and top about the size of a saucer. When long enough this hair is worked upon by a friend of the wearer with a long needle and the fore-finger, until the tiny curls natural to the hair are entirely dispersed, leaving a smooth, homogeneous pad about one inch or more thick. The needle is pushed in and out while the finger pats the surface of the hair and massages it, as it were, into the required shape and softness. Having thus acquired his chignon as a base, the young dandy is ready to cover his head with ornaments. He will, perhaps, begin by planting a small wart-hog's tusk in the centre; a small leather disc is stretched on to the base of the tusk, and through holes in the leather pass threads which can be laced into the hair. A few little tiny cylinders made of twisted fibre may also be sewn to the hair, to act as holders for ostrich plumes, if available, or any other feather that can be obtained, preferably of some brilliant colour. But these are merely extras; the main head ornament is the *giwic*, which is itself made of hair as a basis. The hair shaved off from time to time is carefully saved until sufficient is collected to form a sort of cone, some four inches high, and three in diameter at the base. This cone is usually decorated first of all with strings of white and red beads, wound round spirally up to about half way; sometimes the beads are omitted. The remainder

## Dress and Ornaments

of the cone is decorated with small rings of brass and copper wire, or rather cylinders, the wire being first flattened and then bent into cylindrical shape; this is done by the local blacksmith. These rings are pierced each with a tiny hole or two, and are sewn on to the hair cone in even rows, up to the top. The summit is always finished off with an old cartridge case. The whole being completed all the metal work is carefully polished up, and the cone is perched on the top of the mat of hair on the head, and kept in place by a band of leather which passes round the edge of the saucer of hair. The band is usually adorned with half cowrie shells sewn on in a regular row. Examples of these head ornaments will be seen on the heads of some of the men on page 138. The elder men do not wear a *giwic*, but prefer a sort of helmet of hair, sometimes actually growing on the head, at others cut loose, so that it can be put on and off like a hat. These take years to grow, and the owners are exceedingly proud of them. Patterns in white and red beads are sewn on to the hair, or it may be left plain and a pompom of black ostrich feathers worn on the top.

Patiko is indeed the paradise of the curio hunter, as all the ornaments are elaborated with considerable skill, and every part of the body is decorated in some way or other, so that a great variety of objects can be obtained. A peculiarly unexpected and yet dearly-prized piece of finery is the glass pencil worn in the lower lip. All boys have their lower lip pierced at about the age of six or seven,

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

and they wear a bit of stick in the hole until able to procure an ornament. The custom was a rather useful one to us, as it found us a splendid market for all our old bottles, which went at about eight-pence apiece or even more, according to the thickness and clear whiteness of the glass. Having succeeded in begging or purchasing a bottle, a youth takes it to the fire and heats it to the point of splitting; he then rakes out the pieces from the fire and selects those most suitable for his purpose. He will spend days sitting by a large wet stone laboriously grinding away at his strip of glass until he has it nicely smooth and tapered to a point, the longer the better, either straight or curved will do; a nick is then rubbed at each side of the thick end, to hold in place a little band of thin brass wire, which serves to keep the glass from slipping out when pushed through the lip from inside.

When a dance is arranged, every youthful brave spends many hours in the morning over his toilet. Every available ornament is crowded on to his body, the parts that do not lend themselves easily to other methods, such as the back, being covered with patterns in different colours; red, green, grey, and white are made with ochre, leaves, and ashes, contrasts being heightened sometimes by giving an added blackness to the background with pot black. A favourite heart-shaped pattern is made by putting together the tips of the thumbs and first fingers, and stencilling in between. Stripes, blotches, lines, stars are all made use of in the schemes of decora-



## Dress and Ornaments

tion according to the taste of the wearer. Small chains may be worn round the back of the head, being suspended from holes in the lobes of the ears ; failing chains any piece of metal may be worn as an ear-ring, such as the tin tag off a soldered biscuit tin, or the wire key supplied with so many kinds of canned provisions for tearing off the strip round the lid. In the nose a disc of ivory is sometimes seen, or a piece of metal may be thrust through a hole in the cartilage. A tippet of fur adorns the shoulders, and an apron of kid-skin, edged with beadwork and beautifully whitened, is much admired. A circle of tin cut from an old biscuit box makes an excellent bracelet, and on the forehead a looking-glass gives a striking and uncommon effect. It may also come in useful if one of your friends happens to want to touch up his war-paint during the afternoon, as was the case when the photo on page 132 was taken. The wearer of the mirror is a strapping fellow named Latodo, who was famed for the elaborate nature of his costume at every dance, and on ordinary occasions as well. The full effect of his style is seen on page 33, where he is the dancer standing on the right hand. The feather head-dress worn by his companion on the left is a not very common ornament in Patiko ; the Gan' are more fond of pompoms made of black ostrich feathers, which are worn on the head or used to decorate the backbone of a buffalo-hide shield. Occasionally the pompom would be extended into a sort of helmet, covering the head and coming a fair distance down the neck.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

Many of the ornaments seen in the illustrations are worn at any time, like the *giwic*, not only at dances. The first kind to be worn are the waistbands of twisted grass, noticeable in the picture on page 179. Boys first begin to wear these at about the age of ten, and continue to wear them as long as they use the *giwic*. Scores of these grass rings are worn, and it takes a boy some days or even weeks to make sufficient for a complete girdle. As soon as he can afford it a youth puts on the tight iron rings which are seen on the upper arm; the tight compression of these is of prime importance, and if through sickness or any cause a youth becomes thin and his armlets grow loose, he goes at once to the smith to have them tightened. The natural result is ulcerated arms in many cases, and muscles distorted for life in all; young men will struggle manfully to bear the discomfort of the chafing on the raw flesh, pushing fragments of rag up under the iron to ease the pain. Only when the torture becomes unbearable will they consent to have the armlets removed, and then only until the sores have healed. Necklets also made of iron rings, less tight of course than those on the arms, are much admired by the ultra dandy, such as the gentleman on page 199; he has added wristlets of the same pattern, and is wearing one of the curious wrist knives, which seem to be peculiar to the Gan' tribe. These are made of a circle of soft iron, sharpened on the outer edge, and are bent and slipped over the wrist like a lady's bangle. A leather strip acts as sheath, and protects the





METHOD OF DRESSING THE HAIR IN PATIKO.

The operator's name is N'wec, or Fleet-foot, the patient is called N'adi, or So-and-so.

( See p. 188.)

## Dress and Ornaments

edge ; the knife is for the purpose of frustrating an adversary who attempts to seize the wrist, or to give a sideways blow in fighting. Sometimes in dancing armlets made of cord are worn, with a giraffe's tail so attached as to stand out at right angles ; this is tossed and waggled to and fro in what is thought to be a very taking manner.

The preparation of the red ochre so much used for purposes of decoration, and for anointing babies after their bath, is the work of the women. Red mud is fetched from certain swamps, the water of which contains a great deal of iron salts ; the mud is moulded into balls and carried in baskets to the village. Having been dried in the sun, the earth is thoroughly roasted in the fire, then pounded up and finally ground fine on stones, like flour. The resulting powder, which is of a brilliant scarlet, may be used dry or made into a paint with butter.

The elder men among the Gan' employ but few ornaments ; they have settled down into sober family life, and no longer require to make themselves attractive in appearance. An ivory bracelet or a ring of heavy brass is about all that an elder wears, with the addition of a skin thrown over one shoulder. The women and girls are fond of ornaments to some extent, but do not expend anything like the same amount of time and pains on their elaboration. For a dance they make no preparation as a rule, except for a few girls who smear themselves from head to foot in red ochre paint. Bead necklaces often accumulate until they amount to many pounds' weight ; armlets and wristlets of

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

coiled wire are worn by most, always of brass, never of iron wire like the young men. For waist-belts long strings of discs cut out of ostrich eggs are much used. Unmarried girls do not need, according to native custom, to wear any clothing or costume, but married women are never seen without their belt with a bunch of tails hanging down in front.

As befits, and indeed is necessary for, a nation of hunters, every grown man among the Gan' has his pair of sandals; with most tribes these are regarded as more or less of a luxury, but no Gan' ventures anywhere without a pair, as he never knows when he may be off the paths on some stalk or track after game. When he is hunting, too, he may have to follow the fire over the burning stubble and hot stones, and without sandals his feet would soon be blistered. The proceeds of his many hunts provide him with abundant leather, unlike the less fortunate of some tribes, who have but few opportunities of acquiring the much-coveted aids to walking. The hides of different animals are variously prized for this purpose according to their wearing properties, elephant naturally coming first, while there follow in order of merit buffalo, giraffe, water-buck, haartebeest, and then other antelope or oxen. Children must perforce be content with goat or small antelope, if they can get even those.

In the Teso country many fewer ornaments are worn, and none of such elaborate character as those used by the Gan'. Young men may have bands of cowrie shells round the head, as in the picture

## Dress and Ornaments

on page 127, also belts of the same or of iron cylinders. Beads are much in vogue, the fashions varying, small white and crimson being most in request at present, such as those seen on the arms and noses of these two lads. A favourite ornament is a long strip of leather covered with little iron cylinders, and finished off with a cow's tail at the bottom; this is a sort of substitute for the Chinaman's pigtail, being worn down the back, suspended from the neck.

Older men are as a rule absolutely nude and devoid of ornaments, except, perhaps, for a brass bracelet or two of great weight, and anklets of the same material and equally cumbrous bulk. Occasionally the bracelets are of iron, and though not tight fitting, are apt to produce ulcers or thick pads of skin where they chafe. One old man came to our dispensary with a most fearful arm, due to the wearing of these bracelets; we were told he had worn them for several years, and how he could have endured the agony they must have caused him is a mystery. One at the wrist and one at the thick part of the forearm, these iron rings, each an inch thick and perhaps two pounds in weight, had become buried in the flesh so as to be partly invisible; the ends had gradually worried their way under the muscles for the space of perhaps two or three inches, and the entire arm was one great reeking sore. At first I thought there was no cure but amputation, but this the sufferer would not hear of for a moment, and it was fortunate that he held out, for a cure was

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

effected. I took the poor old fellow to my workshop, where I had a powerful vice. Into this after considerable trouble one of the bracelets was fixed without pinching the arm; one of the patient's friends was then enlisted as assistant to hold down with a piece of flat iron the flesh that had grown up round the bracelet. Half an hour's hard work with a hack-saw was needed to cut through the metal in that cramped position, and then a little manipulation with pincers disengaged the two pieces of the bracelet from their bed in the flesh. The second bracelet gave equal trouble both in gripping it in the jaws of the vice and in sawing it through without cutting the flesh, and then at last the old man was free from his fetters that had galled him for five years. It only remained to dress the arm with antiseptics and advise the patient, who came from some distance, to take up his abode in our little hospital ward. This he consented to do and went off home to get food. From that day to this I have never seen him, as he did not return after all; but inquiries of people from his village elicited the satisfactory news that he had quite recovered. The blindest devotee of fashion in England would hardly perhaps carry devotion to such a pitch, nor even in Patiko have I ever seen such injury due to the wearing of ornaments. No doubt by the time this old man had determined that he had better have the bracelets off, the arm had become too bad for him to endure the rough methods of a native smith.

Girls and women of all ages in Teso love to



## Dress and Ornaments

accumulate bead necklaces and strings of shells until their necks are really heavily loaded. Down at the wells and pools a party of girls may often be seen washing their "clothes"—that is to say, rubbing with sand and water their masses of beads and shells and scrubbing each others' backs in between times with the same cleansing materials. Great fun they have together dashing pots of water over each other, finally filling up with water for home use and filing up the hill to the village, their black skins shining with the wet and their faces with smiles.

Round their waists they are fond of wearing belts made of iron cylinders, such as are used by some of the men; more wealthy ladies will make a belt of the cents issued by Government to take the place of the old cumbrous shells; the cents, being perforated, can be easily strung together, and a few rupees' worth make a fine solid girdle for one who can afford to have so much money lying idle. The anklets are of solid or hollow iron rings, which chink continually as the wearer walks; when the congregation files out of church the aggregate noise is quite considerable, and if a mother is obliged to take out a crying baby the clatter almost stops the sermon.

But all these styles of self-ornamentation are "softly and silently vanishing away" before the all-conquering march of calico and other Manchester goods. First come the calico trousers, cheapest to obtain and most serviceable to wear; often the price of hours of labour on a European's

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

garden or the wage for carrying his bedding or tent. Others may attain their ambition to cover their persons like the white man by laboriously collecting the needful complement of cents, selling eggs, firewood, fowls, or potatoes; another will earn his pair by carrying bricks up from the moulding-sheds to the building, at five bricks per cent, or five hundred for sixteen pence. As a brick weighs 15 lbs., and the distance is about one-third of a mile, a pair of calico trousers costs him the transport of something over a ton and a half and anything from five to fifteen miles tramping, according to the number of bricks he is able to carry at a time. The trousers when earned are worth the sum of eightpence. This in the Teso district; in Patiko we found the people far more independent in this as in other matters. It was not easy to persuade any young men to undertake work for wages or clothes; the ornaments which they made themselves were considered far more indispensable. Even when a man possessed a pair of trousers he did not by any means always wear them on his legs; if he were on a journey, the trousers would be very likely wrapped round his neck, or, in company with any other garments he possessed, tied up in a bundle and carried on his head. This on account of the destructive action upon calico of long wet jungle grass, cleared roads in the district being few and far between. When he draws near to his destination he will halt for a few moments to dress, and make his entry of the village in full attire.





A GAN' DANDY.

(See p. 192.)

## Dress and Ornaments

There are other uses, too, for trousers ; a missionary travelling in the Gan' country was once rather startled to see a man who had food for the visitor's porters produce his contribution of flour tied up in his trousers ; the ends of the legs being fastened in knots, a sort of double sack was formed, which was considered quite a suitable receptacle for the flour.

In Patiko a great many of the chiefs and headmen are the happy owners of old (and new) British uniforms, which have been given to them by officers passing through the country. The result is quite a military tone in salutation and demeanour, the salute being a favourite form of greeting, and no doubt considered of great value to indicate familiarity with European customs. The bright colouring of the uniforms is of course a great recommendation, and added to the prestige of disporting oneself in a real soldier's costume makes such clothing the height of every man's ambition. If a bandolier can be added and an old Snider or other gun, then, indeed, is the wearer left with nothing more to wish for ; he is on a level with an enlisted soldier, almost a European.

For purposes of grandeur and importance a gun is worth almost more than any clothes, even uniforms. To have even the craziest of gas-pipes and a dozen cartridges to fit it (or some other gun) is to be a person who inspires awe in the breasts of all and sundry. Clothes then matter little, and may be reduced to the minimum of the bandolier and a red fez. Any garment, too, may

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

be worn by itself, even a coat, the effect of which by itself is to a European to say the least ludicrous. One Sunday morning we were startled by the appearance in church of a man, known as *Marwa*, or "Beer," owing to his drunken habits, clothed solely and exclusively in a long frock-coat of large dimensions and tattered condition, which had once been black, but now graced a hoary age with a delicate bottle-green tint. Beneath appeared a pair of bare black—really black—legs; above, equally jetty, a smiling, self-satisfied visage that bore no trace of consciousness except of conscious pride.

Fragments of gorgeous-striped flannels, reminiscent of all the cricket clubs that ever pitched stumps, might be fashioned with artless art into close-fitting waistcoats, that for association of in-harmonious colours would rival even the modern hat. Coats, waistcoats, trousers might be patched with white calico, turkey-red twill, or gorgeous-patterned Manchester cloths till but little of the original tweed was left to bear witness to the fact that this was once a white man's garment. Anything or everything might minister to the love of prestige supposed to accrue to the wearing of clothes.

If the same prestige were to attach to personal cleanliness, it would be an undoubted gain to such as the Patiko folk; but the imitation of methods of dress does by no means involve imitation of hygiene. When clothes first became general in N'ora we had quite an epidemic of skin disease,

## Dress and Ornaments

which had been rare before, rare as the soap still was that might have averted the evil. People like the Gan' who normally use bright paints for clothing are not likely to spoil the effect of the elaborate colouring by much attention to soap and water. Sickness, too, is always a valid excuse for not troubling to wash. The one part of the person to which real attention is paid is the teeth; all natives are alike in spending much time in polishing their magnificent ivories. The end of a twig is employed as a burnisher, and every tooth receives ample care, time being of no object if snowy whiteness is to be attained.

The introduction of clothes to naked races is, in fact, a mixed blessing. In the matter of morality, which is supposed to be improved by covering nakedness, the use of clothes is simply piling Pelion on Ossa; to the lack of morality, which was at least void of self-consciousness, is added a prudery far harder to combat. A missionary in East Africa heard complaints from girls that whereas in the days of their nakedness they could go unmolested, as soon as they put on clothes they were the victims of rude attentions on the part of youths who had previously shown no disposition to interfere with them. In the first instance the only benefit from the wearing of clothes is to the susceptibilities of Europeans; the effect on the native mind is at best only an access of self-importance and consequent independence and indisposition to work. It therefore seems advisable to hinder rather than encourage the early introduction of garments,

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

making quite sure that the movement in the direction of covering the person is entirely spontaneous, and then trying to guide the fashions in the most rational direction.



## CHAPTER XII

### CRAFTS AND IMPLEMENTS

“Skilled in all the craft of hunters,  
Learned in all the lore of old men.”

LONGFELLOW : “HIAWATHA.”

AMONG the changes for which the introduction of civilisation is responsible in Uganda is the disappearance of many of the utensils and implements till lately in common use. While the old pottery, mats, bark-cloths, &c., are still to be seen in large numbers in the country districts, in the large centres they are being rapidly replaced by imported goods, enamelled ironware, Manchester cloths, and so forth. The making and selling of these objects is now passing into the hands of men who hawk them round to the residents and tourists in Kampala, and who take orders for any article that is not in stock ; a drum, a shield, spears, harps, mats, pottery in the shape of European tumblers or wine-glasses, and any article in use in the country can be obtained from these dealers at a few days' notice, just as in any tourist-frequented country. Many of the things are now only made to sell as curios, such as shields, while the scanty supply of such articles as palm-leaf mats has raised the price to

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

quite ten times what it was ten years ago. Soon, no doubt, spears, pots, shields, and arrows will be made by the gross in Birmingham, like the idols for West Africa, and will be retailed to the curio hunter at 100 per cent. profit by a persistent hawker with a scanty supply of broken English and an unlimited stock of impudence.

Among the Baganda peasants and the members of the less advanced tribes the household utensils that sufficed their ancestors still content the present generation, it may be from preference or it may be from lack of means to purchase the more expensive, if more durable, European articles. The prices paid for native-made pottery or basket-work are so extraordinarily low, and the profits extorted by the Indian bazaar keepers on all imported goods are so extraordinarily inflated, that it takes a good many breakages of milk-bowls, for example, to make up the cost of one enamelled iron basin. I was once bargaining with a woman in Butiti for a black bowl to be used in the dispensary. She asked me five shells, the value of shells at the time being sixty a penny; I was about to agree when some young men standing by complained that I was spoiling the market; the proper price of the bowl was three shells only, and they could not afford to have the price raised 40 per cent. at one swoop! So I paid my three shells, with a feeling that I must have cheated the woman, although she had nothing to say in reply to the young men. As a sample of the prices charged by the Indian shopkeepers, on the other hand, I may quote the fact

## Crafts and Implements

that I was once made to pay half a rupee, value eightpence, for one inch of rubber tubing for my bicycle valve, the price in England being usually one penny per foot. The spirit of these shopkeepers is shown by a remark once made to me in the bazaar at N'ora ; I had asked a man named Gulamsem Mohammed why he imported such miserably third-rate bicycles instead of getting some sound make. His reply was, " I do not want to ride them ; they are only to sell to the natives." So only chiefs among such a tribe as the Teso as a rule have European basins, cups and saucers, and so forth ; the common people are happy enough with their own manufactures, and such old tins, jampots, and other empties as the Europeans throw or give away.

There being no idols or other objects of worship to be shaped and carved, the peoples of Uganda can expend all their time, skill, and energies on the production of household utensils and weapons of war, or on the elaboration of personal ornaments. First and foremost of all implements in all districts is the hoe ; on this depends the maintenance of the food supply, the paramount consideration of life to the African, and in districts where iron is not easy to obtain no present gives more pleasure than a good sound hoe. Of the quality of his hoe the African is very critical, and in this matter he does not believe in the impropriety of looking a gift horse in the mouth. Especially contemptuous is the recipient of one of the cheap, soft, black iron hoes, imported in large numbers by the shop-

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

keepers and literally "made in Germany"; their life is short, especially if the ground be hard and stones or roots numerous. The best implements are those made in the district of Mwenge, around Butiti, where the raw material is plentiful. All about the country one may see the deep pits where smelting operations have been carried on; as you pass a village a steady puff-puff or the clink of a hammer tells of the presence of a forge. As in England, "the smith a mighty man is he," but only in the muscles of his right arm; these are often developed out of all proportion to the rest of his body; as the smith squats at his work and uses for a hammer just a short bar of iron, only the right arm is exercised in any special degree. For bellows he has a simple device, which is in use all over Uganda; a pair of deep earthenware trays, provided with long spouts at one side, are covered over with lids of raw, soft sheepskin, tied round beneath the rims of the trays. The spouts are led into a single larger spout, which tapers into the fire of wood charcoal. To the centre of the skin over each tray is securely tied a thin rod, by means of which the skin is agitated up and down, thus sending a current of air through the spouts; the hands being worked alternately a continuous current is generated in the large spout and into the fire. A large heavy stone serves for an anvil, and two pieces of green bamboo tied together, and occasionally dipped in water, supply the lack of pincers. The hoes next in favour to those from Mwenge are the Busindi make, and in Patiko a

## Crafts and Implements

giant kind from the Congo were considered very fine, though so dear as to be beyond the means of most, the price reaching two goats. Some of the people to the west of Ruwenzori are said to use the femora of elephants for digging purposes, but this native report, if true, may have been merely the account of a chance occurrence.

In other districts, as Patiko and Teso, where there are no pyrites for smelting, the smiths merely do repairs or adapt the old bits of hoes into other implements or ornaments. In this way may be made the girdles of iron cylinders worn in Teso, the wrist knives so much admired by the Gan', and such articles as arrow-heads, rings, and armlets.

Having procured his hoe, the next thing for the cultivator to do is to fit it with a handle, which is made from a branch that has an arm projecting at an angle of about 45 degrees. This is trimmed into a V, with one arm short and the other long, the proportionate length of the arms varying according to the district. All the Bantu tribes of Uganda use short handles, and bend down low to dig; the Teso also follow this rule. But in Patiko the handle is extended to about four feet, so that there is no necessity to bend or stoop; indeed, stooping would be uncomfortable or even impossible to many of the young men, covered as they are with ornaments, their waists restricted with grass belts, their necks with iron collars, and their heads bearing the *giwic*. Another advantage of the long handle is the increased length of stroke and extra leverage obtained, this resulting in more

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

work in the same time and consequently larger crops.

In the north of the Teso district there are people who are too lazy, apparently, even to stand up to dig; they tie their hoe on to the end of a straight stick, after the manner of an English spade, and sit down or kneel down to their work, driving the spade in much as we might use a big trowel. The result is, of course, very superficial cultivation, but as the soil of the district is very light and sandy, the crops do not seem to suffer. In Patiko a weeding implement was sometimes to be seen, made of a worn-out hoe tied to the end of a long bamboo; this, too, was of the "lazy-tongs" class, enabling the weeder to sit down and weed a considerable area without moving. It must be admitted that it was usually an old man or woman who was using this tool, the majority were not by any means lazy.

Next in importance to cultivation comes hunting, to which is closely allied fighting, at least in the implements required, and therefore next to the hoe comes the spear. In the fully administered districts of Uganda but few spears are now to be seen, the carrying of them in townships is forbidden, and their use as walking-sticks has nearly died out. Only when the war note sounds on the big drum in some chief's courtyard to give the alarm of fire or beast of prey do the spears see the light of day again for a brief space. But in wilder parts every man carries his spear or spears; when feuds are proceeding between village





VILLAGE ON THE BORDERS OF THE PIGMY FOREST.

Note the "sofa" in the centre of the picture.

(See p. 217.)



## Crafts and Implements

and village each man when he goes to till his land takes all the spears he can carry, and digs, as the Jews once built, with a weapon in one hand and his tool in the other. There is always, too, the chance that some antelope may be seen and killed, or that some beast of prey may have to be fought. Accordingly every man in Patiko walks about armed, those who can take guns, those who can't carry sticks and spears and shield.

Besides, there are many uses for a spear on the road as well as its first purpose as a weapon. If you sit down to rest it will serve as pen-knife to pare your finger nails; if you are without a knife you can pull off your spear-head to skin your quarry, to cut up your food, or to sharpen a spit for roasting meat. If you cut your foot on a sharp stone the loose flap of skin can be removed with the spear's sharp edge, or the same weapon will find its way down to a buried thorn in sole or finger; it will cut strips of bark to tie up the meat or parcel of entrails after a hunt, or trim the pegs for stretching the moist hide out upon the ground to dry.

At the same time the knife is a good second in importance to the spear, and a necessity to the women. In Buganda a woman has her plaintains or potatoes to peel, the dead leaves to trim off the banana-trees, the green ones to cut for wrapping up the peeled fruit in the pot. In Teso or Patiko she has to cut all the new thatch, trim her brooms, and so forth. In some parts the knife also has its use as a weapon almost more than as a

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

domestic implement. The thieves of Busoga are very fond of carrying a short knife between their teeth for purposes of defence and offence when they are on their burgling expeditions, and such is their reputation for swift and murderous attack if disturbed, that many peaceful folk say they would never interfere with a Musoga thief, but let him take what he liked and depart unmolested.

In Patiko the knives are made the vehicle of ornamentation like everything else that is prized. The handles are inlaid with morsels of brass and tin, while the sheaths are decorated with rings of the same metals. All the knives of the Gan' are two-edged, and the sheaths consist of a strip of leather bent into a V, again folded along the edges in a V-shape, and secured with a lace at the broad end. In shape these knives are straight, like daggers, with a thick rib in the middle. A much longer weapon is occasionally seen, slightly curved and with only one edge; the blade of this is about a foot long, and the handle nearly as much; the same leather V-shaped sheath is used for this. The wrist knives worn by the young men seem to be peculiar to this district, and are more ornaments than weapons.

A little implement seen among the Teso people is of the nature of a knife and may therefore be mentioned here; it is the tiny sickle used in reaping and worn on the middle finger of the right hand after the manner of a ring.

Among the varied styles in shields, pride of place is held by that made of buffalo hide; for tough-

## Crafts and Implements

ness and durability this hide is not to be surpassed, and few warriors will even listen to a proposal to sell so desirable a possession, except at an extravagant price. A pompom of black ostrich feathers is much fancied to finish off the top of the centre rib. Less fortunate people have to be content with the ordinary shield of wicker-work, which is made in the same shape as those of buffalo hide, seen in the illustration facing page 235. Among the Banyoro, shields are now very scarce, not being required for purposes of defence, while there is not demand enough for them to be made for selling as curios, as they are in Buganda.

The axe is another implement which also serves as a weapon to some extent in Patiko. In Bantu districts the axe is purely domestic, a wedge-shaped piece of iron, the thick, narrow end being passed through a hole burnt in a thick club, so that the harder the blows struck, the tighter the blade is fixed in the handle. The English method of passing the haft through the axe-head is considered much inferior, as the head is so liable to fly off, or the haft to break off short. A much neater and more elaborate haft is employed in Patiko, carved into trident shape at the head and decorated, like the knife handles, with inlaid work of tin and brass. The blades, too, are more slender and better finished, and a ring of iron is passed through a hole in the point of the blade, where it projects through the haft. These axes are used by the Gan', not only for splitting firewood and the bones of slaughtered animals, but also as weapons. A

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

few men are skilful in throwing them, and can even hit small birds settled on the ground at a distance of twenty yards.

We sometimes had brought to us wounds made with a species of loaded stick, which is a favourite weapon with the Gan'. About two feet and a half long, pointed at the end, and loaded just below the point with a heavy ring of iron, this may be in the hands of a determined man a most dangerous weapon. It is called *olik*, and is used for either striking or throwing; in the latter case the point inflicts a deep wound, while a blow on the head splits open or knocks in the skull. Only the extremely tough heads of negro races could withstand the effect of such blows; one sometimes sees men with scars on their heads, an inch or two across and half an inch deep, the result of wounds inflicted with the *olik*.

To turn to more pacific implements, one of the most necessary articles in an African home is the basket. Of many sizes and multifarious uses, it is one of the things on which most care and skill is expended, and which surpasses in quality any imported substitute. There is the large bushel basket, made of thin strips of bamboo, used for carrying ears of corn home from the fields in Patiko; its smaller sister, of the same material, for the reception of heavier goods of the same kind; the wicker basket, made of osiers from a pretty low shrub, cultivated for the purpose in Teso, of all sizes, and smeared with cow-dung to prevent the grain from dropping through. There is the

## Crafts and Implements

cheap basket, roughly made, for carrying earth or mud in building ; the wide, open basket with arched lid, made of split papyrus stems, sewn and laced together with the bark of the same plant ; these are to be seen among the Bantu tribes. Queen of all is the Buganda grass basket, woven in stripes of varied colours, the small sizes so closely and tightly plaited as to be water-tight. The baskets made by the Baganda and Banyoro for serving up food are low and open, and made of papyrus, sometimes no deeper than trays. The Teso people make flat lids to many of their baskets, and these serve also as winnowing trays, or for carrying rubbish, earth, or weeds. They are always smeared with cow-dung, so that not even dust can pass through. The Bakeni make huge crates of thin plaited cane for fish-traps, in shape much like a water-pot with a very narrow mouth. The Teso women catch fish in baskets of elliptical shape, rather deep, and curving in towards the top edge ; with these they sweep along the water of shallow swamps and rivers, or the margin of lakes, and make good hauls of small fish in the manner of a shrimping net.

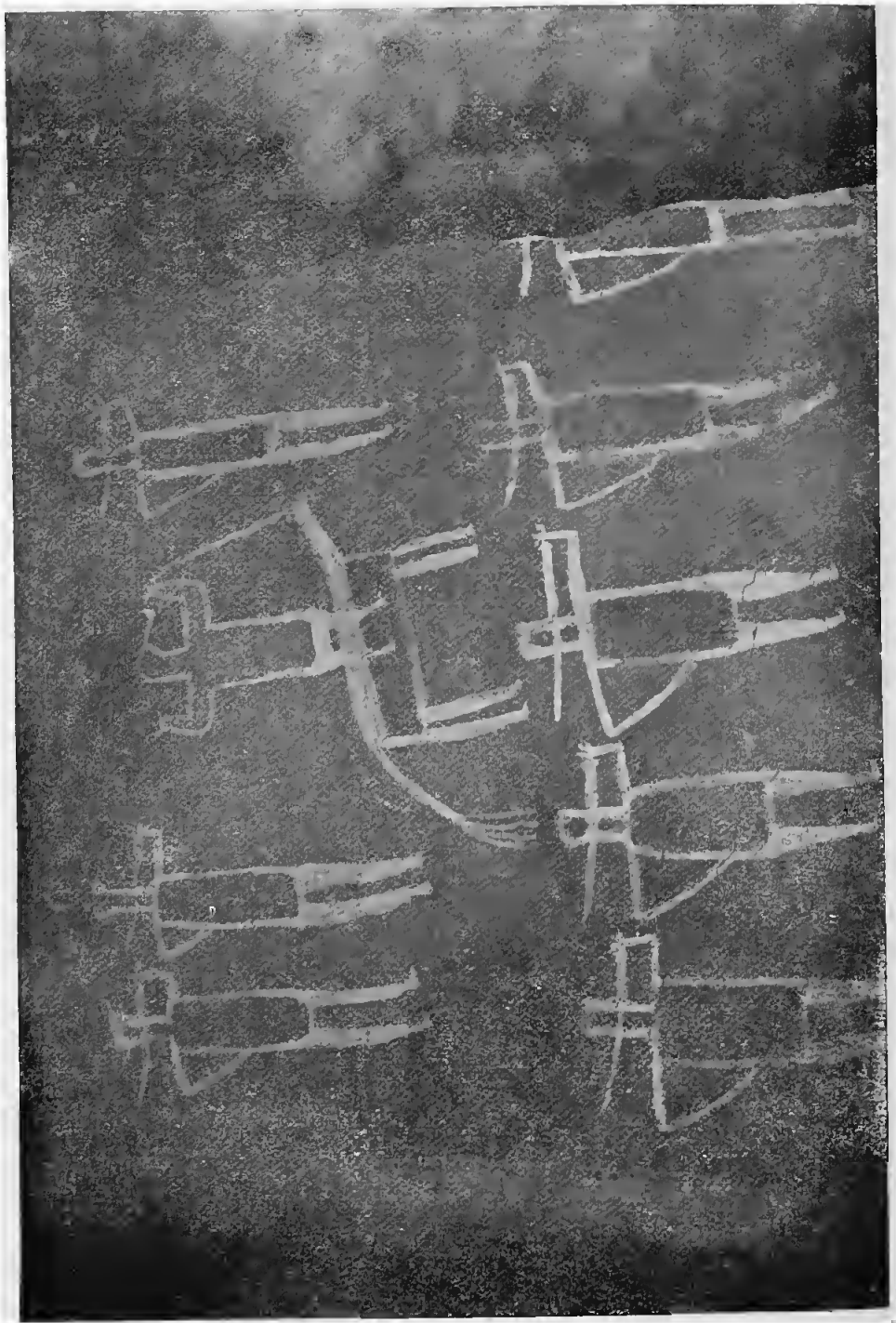
As for the ordinary household basket its uses are many and varied. Into the largest are packed all the family belongings when a journey is to be made, and some of the baskets will have to make many trips ere all the corn is shifted to the new abode. In a house that possesses no cupboards or boxes or drawers, the only place in which to store anything is in a basket, with a good big stone on

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

the lid to keep the rats out. If a fowl has a family of chickens, they can all be kept safe from rats and other marauders during the night by covering them up with a good large basket. Your little ones will be required to hold the flour as it slips over the edge of the grindstone, or to take in your hand when you go out to gather a few herbs for the evening meal. If you take flour or potatoes to sell in the camping-place, or cotton to the market, you will require baskets again of varying sizes; a good big one will hold a rupee's worth of fluttering, cluttering hens and cockerels to take to the house of the European for sale. If eggs are the commodity to be disposed of then a feeble imitation of a basket is made of grass, and thrown away when finished with. All day and every day the basket is in evidence in each household.

Closely allied to the baskets in their method of manufacture are the granaries used among the grain-eating tribes for storing millet, semsem, and other food stuffs. These have been described in Chapter VI., as used in the Teso country, and similar erections are usual in Patiko. But sometimes mud-walled granaries are to be seen, decorated with drawings in different coloured earths. The outlines occur of men riding on animals, and these, you discover, are intended to represent travellers such as yourself riding upon mules. Or the European may be shown aiming with a gun, and these two poses seem to indicate the points in which the superiority of the white man most appeals to the native mind; he is able to afford a beast





NATIVE DRAWINGS ON A PATIKO GRANARY.

(See p. 214.)



## Crafts and Implements

to ride upon and to possess guns with sufficient ammunition to be expended rashly on shooting meat. Antelope figure in many of the drawings, or leopards, always easy to distinguish by the lavish allowance of spots, beloved of all primitive draughtsmen. Giraffes are also quickly identified by their long necks, elephants by their tusks, and cattle by their horns, but in many cases the artist needs an interpreter before his intention is clear to the European intelligence.

The only other purely native drawings I have seen were in a house on the very edge of the pigmy forest. It was the dwelling of the last chief before you got into the domains of the forest-dwellers, by name Ompedi, and was unfortunately too dark for photography to be possible without the help of magnesium ribbon, which I had not with me at the time. Some of the drawings represented men and animals, but the more interesting were attempts at depicting the heavenly bodies; sun, moon, and stars were all there in crude outline of red, blue, white, and black, on a dingy background of brown mud. These drawings formed the decoration at the back of the platform on which the chief held his courts, and were no doubt considered to contribute not a little to his renown and dignity.

In a smaller house hard by were more elaborate representations of animals and men; leopards with stupendous tails, hyænas, dogs; a man on horseback could also be made out. In spite of the crude nature of the drawings, the intention in each

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

case was pretty obvious, and some parts were done in relief. The spotted type of colouring proper to the leopard and hyæna was evidently much admired as it was extended to other objects.

The woodwork turned out by members of Uganda tribes is not elaborate for the most part, though often neatly finished. While basket-work and other grasswork can be finished off with the fingers and elaborated with no other tools, working in wood cannot be carried to any degree of perfection without the use of more or less well-designed tools of many patterns. The African has but his knife and his rough adze, and can only bore holes with a red-hot rod of iron. So his woodwork tends to be heavy and effective rather than neat and ornamental. Some of the stools made by the Baganda are well hollowed and finished off, and the Banyoro carve their bowls with a certain rude skill. But for the rest utility rules the production of wooden articles. A hollowed log serves for a mortar and a club for a pestle to pound semsem or coffee berries or ground nuts. Among the Teso a similar article with the addition of a lip for pouring is used as a milking pail. Dishes shaped like tureens are used by the Banyoro for serving up messes of herbs, and flatter trays are used by the Gan' tribe for the same purpose.

In the making of chairs or stools fair skill is displayed; the round, hollowed seats of the Baganda are not imitated by the non-Bantu tribes. Little stools of bent wood are a favourite ornament with the people of Patiko, being almost too

## Crafts and Implements

small for use, though sometimes a youth may be seen perched upon one. The seat is so diminutive as to be practically invisible when in use, and measures perhaps six inches by three or four; the legs are of a piece with the seat, and are bent over at right angles, and kept from springing back by a thong of twisted hide. More primitive stools are made by the Teso and Karamojo peoples out of roots. A piece of solid root is selected, with two or three projecting prongs, which are cut off to length to make legs. The upper part of the root is then smoothed to form a seat. Such a stool is being used by the centre figure on page 187. Even more crude are some of the stools in Teso, consisting merely of a short branch, with bits of projecting branches left on to form legs; nothing is done by way of manufacture, except to cut off the legs to length. At the very bottom of the list for comfort and skill in manufacture comes a "sofa" I once found in use in a village of the Bahuku tribe, on the edge of the pigmy forest. It consisted of a bare log, about the thickness of a man's calf, one end of which rested on the ground while the other was raised about a foot by the ends of two branches left on. At full length upon this log reclined a naked cannibal, apparently quite comfortable until he realised that there was a white man approaching, when he rose and fled incontinently. When I examined his primitive bit of furniture closely the puzzle was to understand how a human being, especially with no clothes to soften the impact, could possibly maintain his position

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

on it, much less enjoy the smallest degree of comfort.

The only piece of work attempted on at all a large scale is the manufacture of dug-out canoes. Only the Baganda understand how to build canoes of adzed planks ; on all the waterways other than the Victoria Nyanza the boats in use are the hollowed tree trunks, keelless, prowless, seatless ; cumbrous and awkward to manage for the most part, and usually leaky. The completion of one of these dug-outs is a matter of many months from the time of felling the tree to the triumphant consummation, when at length the craft takes the water, perhaps many miles from the place of its growth. The first step after the bark has been stripped off is to burn the greater part of the wood away, and then the adzes come into play to shape the interior and exterior to the required curves and slopes. The critical parts are the ends where the grain of the wood of course runs into concentric circles, which are very apt to crack away from each other and allow pieces to fall out. The only method of caulking cracks is to fill them with lumps of swamp mud and roots, which of course need constant renewal ; a very large hole is sometimes covered with a rough-hewn board, sewn on with fibres and packed round with the same temporary caulking material.

These dug-outs vary much in size, from ten feet long up to perhaps forty. On the Albert Lake the very biggest canoes are called *nyina barongo*, or “ mother of twins.” This signifies that the trunk

## Crafts and Implements

out of which that canoe was fashioned was so large that two smaller ones could be made out of the upper part, after the big one had been cut off.

About the only craft regularly practised as a trade beside that of blacksmith is that of potter. The opportunities for the exercise of this art are, like the trade of smith, limited by the supply and proximity of raw material. Only in certain swamps can be found the particular clay that has sufficient cohesion when baked to make good pots, and where there is a good hole of such clay a number of potters are sure to be found in the neighbourhood. The method of moulding pots is absolutely simple and primitive, no wheel or other aid being employed. The clay having been well worked, and if necessary mixed with some gravelly material to prevent cracking, is just built up into the required shape bit by bit, pressed and squeezed with the fingers previously dipped into water. Having dried slowly in the shade, the pottery is baked by being laid out upon a thick pile of firewood, covered with more wood and grass, and allowed to lie until the wood has burnt out and the ashes have slowly cooled.

Elaborately decorated black ware is made by the Bantu tribes and used for milk ; a good polish is obtained on some of this ware, and much of it is sold in Buganda as curios. In Teso neat tobacco-pipes are made of a kind of fine red clay that resembles terra-cotta when baked ; geometrical patterns are cut round the top edge by way of decoration. This scribing of patterns on pottery

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

has given to us words for "writing" in both the Gan' and Teso dialects, although the more accurate Luganda word is generally preferred by those who have had any education. The action of scratching marks with a pointed pen suggests naturally the tracing of lines on the wet clay.

In these primitive communities each man as a rule makes what he requires for his use with his own hands, and only the jobs requiring of necessity tools or extra skill are the preserves of a specific individual. The housewife makes her own brooms out of a bundle of twigs, or, as in Teso, of a bunch of fine yellow grass, tied tightly and bent in the middle, so as to bring all the ends together. The man cuts his own walking-stick, scrapes and polishes it, and shapes the handle according to his fancy. Each hunter makes his own nets for antelope or pig catching, plaits his own string for snares, cuts his own hoe-handles, and weaves his own baskets.

The coming of civilisation has naturally brought about an extension of the adoption of regular trades. Industries are being encouraged by the Government and taught by the Missions ; the native chiefs in all districts, desiring to improve their own conditions of life in many directions, are eager to support the teaching of handicrafts, such as carpentry. At the same time, the needs of building and other work on mission stations are supplied by the missionary training raw lads to lay bricks, saw timber, and so forth. After learning some skilled work of this description men often find





TESO SAWYERS AT WORK ; A HEAVY TRUNK TO HANDLE WITHOUT TACKLE.

(See p. 220.



## Crafts and Implements

regular employment under their chiefs, who, indeed, frequently send us men with that idea.

The raw tribes at first view all attempts in this direction with much suspicion. They are bewildered by the introduction of coinage, for instance, they are not willing to believe in the good faith of the employer that he will really pay them the wages he undertakes to give. Perhaps they have been bitten by receiving an old pice (worth  $\frac{1}{4}$ d.) covered with tin-foil by some wily Swahili, instead of a half-rupee, and are in consequence twice shy of trusting to the nimble coin as the equivalent of goods or labour. The rupee first wins its way to favour, small change of all descriptions being refused or parted with as soon as possible. The infant intelligence has proved by experiment that taxes can be paid in silver, but is not so sure of the virtues of nickel in the same direction.

But when the bewilderment is passed there can be no question as to the value of industries as training for the native mind. Discipline, habits of observation, regularity, and accuracy are all instilled to a greater or less extent, self-respect is engendered, and the whole man prepared for the reception of those greater lessons of character and religion which it is the main purpose of the missionary to impart.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PASTIMES

“Call a truce, then, to our labours—  
Let us feast with friends and neighbours—  
And be merry as the custom of our caste.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

WHEN work is reckoned as the chief evil of life there is naturally much time to be “killed” in other pursuits; to be able to say, “I have no work to do” is to attain happiness, and no feature of English economy is more incomprehensible to the African mind than the very suggestion of such a measure as a “Right to Work” Bill. Even an African, devoid of nerves and of any claim to intellectual activity, may get tired in time of sitting idle, of merely conversing, or of smoking his pipe while he watches his wife work. There also comes a time when the stolid baby, conscious of the first dawning of an idea beyond food and sleep, stirs its plump ebony limbs on a voyage of discovery, and, having no toys, sets out to invent new ways of endangering its life.

To the black infant there is little meaning in the most fascinating of English toys; its eyes have never opened wider to gaze at a “puff-puff” on a real railway, so why should the imitation in its hand attract more than a passing glance; when

## Pastimes

it has perhaps never worn a stitch of clothing or so much as seen a bed, the joys of undressing "dolly" and putting her to bed would be hardly likely to impress. One that lives in daily danger from the hoofs of cattle and is accustomed to see dogs treated as vermin is left cold by the appeal of miniature "moo-cows" and "bow-wows." Where houses are built of sticks and mud the use of wooden bricks as a means of amusement is not apparent, though they might come in useful as fire-wood if only they were a bit bigger. If one's parents never on any account grow any plant which is not edible in some part, or otherwise profitable, the delights of a bit of flower-garden seem a strange delusion and inexplicable waste of time.

Thrown, therefore, on its own resources, the black baby spends its time in falling into the fire or making mud-pies with all the zest of a city gutter-snipe, concluding perhaps by eating them. As soon as it is old enough to stagger under a weight, however light, it will find its playtime curtailed by the more serious business of life, such as carrying baskets, pots, or baby sister, or learning to herd goats. In the intervals of these useful employments time will be filled up with imitations of grown-up occupations, just as in England children play at weddings or funerals. In common with all primæval and all-æval babies the African infant mind loves to pretend, even maybe when it dwells in a grown-up body. As the parents ape the chief or the European, so the child apes the elders of the village, tying its diminutive wisp of

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

cloth about its waist in the approved fashion, wearing a bit of stick in its lower lip where one day it hopes to have a glass pencil, and brandishing a long stalk of millet with as much pride as if it were a real spear.

When they go out to herd the goats or cattle the boys are fond of carrying with them their little bows and arrows, with which they hunt the birds; the arrows being merely bits of twig, the birds are safe enough, though the sheep may be straying in every direction at the mercy of thieves or leopards. Both in Teso and in Patiko the boys learn the use of the spear with rods roughly sharpened to a point; with these they try to transfix hoops which are bowled along the ground as fast as possible, so giving good training in quickness of aim at a rapidly running antelope. The most popular event in some sports we once had in Patiko was a spearing competition. We had a long rope which had been used for crossing unbridged rivers, with a pulley of iron to run on it, from which hung a large iron hook. This rope we securely stretched between two large trees at a slope of perhaps one in ten. Meanwhile an old antelope skin had been sewn up into some semblance of its original shape, and stuffed with hay and clods of turf to as nearly as possible the size and form of the living animal. The dummy was suspended from the hook by a piece of rope, dragged with a loose cord to the top end of the rope and allowed to run down on the pulley. The competitors were posted at a distance of perhaps





THE GAME OF NAMUZIGA, PLAYED BY BOYS IN TORO.

(See p. 225.)

## Pastimes

twenty yards and tried to spear the dummy as it ran past them. They were very careful to use only their oldest spears, and only the ferule end, being fearful of spoiling the edge of the heads by striking the iron pulley. A photo of this competition was found to be too risky to be attempted, owing to the somewhat wild aim of some excited youths, whose spears flew in too uncertain a manner to allow of near approach. Among the Teso the boys are also taught aim in stone throwing. A kind of hockey is played by them, under the name *eñure*, a piece of wood doing duty for a ball; the amusement of the tug-of-war is also familiar to these people.

The favourite amusement of most Bantu tribes is wrestling, in which the boys are much encouraged by the King and chiefs in Toro. The only boyish game of any pretence to being called a game of skill that I ever saw in Toro was one called *namuziga*. In this two parties are formed, each player being provided with a piece of string about a yard long, with a bit of wood or an old dry maize cob tied at each end. A rough hoop, made of flexible canes or creepers twisted together and bound round, is flung along the ground by one of each party alternately towards their opponents; as it goes bounding past each boy throws his string in such a way as if possible to twine it round the hoop and upset it. The player who succeeds in this takes to his side the thrower of the hoop; if the hoop gets through safely, the thrower claims a player from his opponents. In the picture on page 225 the boys appear to be merely practising.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

The elders of Bantu tribes, with their respect for authority and reverence for the "throne," are much addicted to the pastime of *okukika*, or "attend court." It may be the King's court of justice or merely the public session of a local dignitary; the essential thing is to wear your best clothes and have plenty of time at your disposal. The visit to court may partake of the nature of an afternoon call, there being no public business on hand at the time, and in this case ample opportunity is afforded for hearing and retailing all the local gossip, for discussing the latest appointments to chieftainships, condoling with those who have sick relatives, and inquiring after the new arrivals in the families of friends and acquaintances. If a new European has lately arrived in the district, now is the time to find out what people think of him, and if he is likely to be a good master if you happen to be seeking a post as servant. It is an opportunity to relate any grievances you may have against your present employer and be amused by the experiences of other servants to Europeans.

The more independent Nilotics prefer to have their village club, so to speak; attendance on the chief has no charms for them, rather the reverse, unless there is something to be got out of him. In each village there is an erection of logs, either raised high above the ground on piles or just sloped up on either side of a fireplace; usually in the shade, but sometimes perforce in the full blaze of the sun. If a big rock is available, the meeting-place is ready to hand without any preparation,



## Pastimes

and in the middle of the day most of the inhabitants of the village are to be found in the shade of the fine trees overhanging the rock platform. If there is no work to be done and the charms of visiting are for the time palling, an unfailing resource is the game called in Luganda *mweso*, in Lunyoro *okusora*, and in Teso *akileyisit*. This game is almost universal in Africa in some form, and the board on which it is played gets but little rest in most villages. A smooth patch of ground, with the requisite holes dug, and with a surface of cow-dung to prevent crumbling, will answer the purpose as well as a board, except that it cannot be moved into the shade when the sun comes over the spot. The only other requisite is the handful of black beans used as counters or men; these are distributed throughout the two rows of holes on each side of the board, and moved by gathering all in any one hole and dropping one into each of the succeeding holes until according to certain rather confusing rules the turn is ended. Under certain conditions the player can take all the men in the holes opposite to the one at which he concludes and distribute them on his own side of the board; the winner is the player who succeeds in capturing all his opponent's pieces. The queer feature, at least to European eyes, is the casual way in which player will succeed player on either side of the board, any one playing for a few moves and giving way to some one else if the game does not go to his fancy or he is called away to some other employment.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

Both old and young in Patiko play a game known as *pete*. The stone of a borassus palm-tree fruit is used as the ball and a wand with a loop of stiff fibre string serves as a cup, the game resembling the English cup and ball. When the ball, to which is attached a string, falls into the loop, it catches and pulls tight the loop ; no element of competition or " sides " appears to be introduced into this game. Another amusement which can be enjoyed without the need for company is the playing of the harp or flute. The latter instrument is exceedingly simple ; a hollow reed cut in the nearest swamp, with a few holes in it, costs nothing and is easily replaced if broken, but it serves to while away the time when you are out in the long grass herding. It is also an instrument much beloved of porters on a journey, being of so little value and so portable. Some men will even play as they march with a 60-lb. load balanced on their heads, but most prefer to wait until the remainder of the caravan, or at any rate the European, want to go to sleep, and then strike up a weary monotony of reiteration, which dins with maddening insistence upon the ear and drives sleep ever farther from the eye, until a frantic dive out of the tent sends the player flying for his life and peace descends upon the camp.<sup>1</sup>

More skill is displayed in the making of the various patterns of harps in different districts. The instruments made of a round or oval gourd covered with lizard skin for sounding-board are more or

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of chapter.

## Pastimes

less peculiar to the Bantu tribes ; of late harp playing has been discouraged by Christian opinion in Buganda, as it is considered loud and suggestive, owing to the low character of the songs usually associated with the harp. The use of the instrument has not yet fallen into the same disrepute among the less advanced tribes, and in Patiko and Teso many men may be seen amusing themselves and their families with song and tune. The favourite instrument in Patiko is formed of a shallow trough of wood, some twelve inches in length and three or four in width. A ledge of wood is left at each end, through which are bored holes for the reception of the strings and pegs. A regular scale of notes is observed for the tuning of the strings, but the range is exceedingly limited, probably not going beyond a single octave. Unaccompanied songs have a much wider compass.

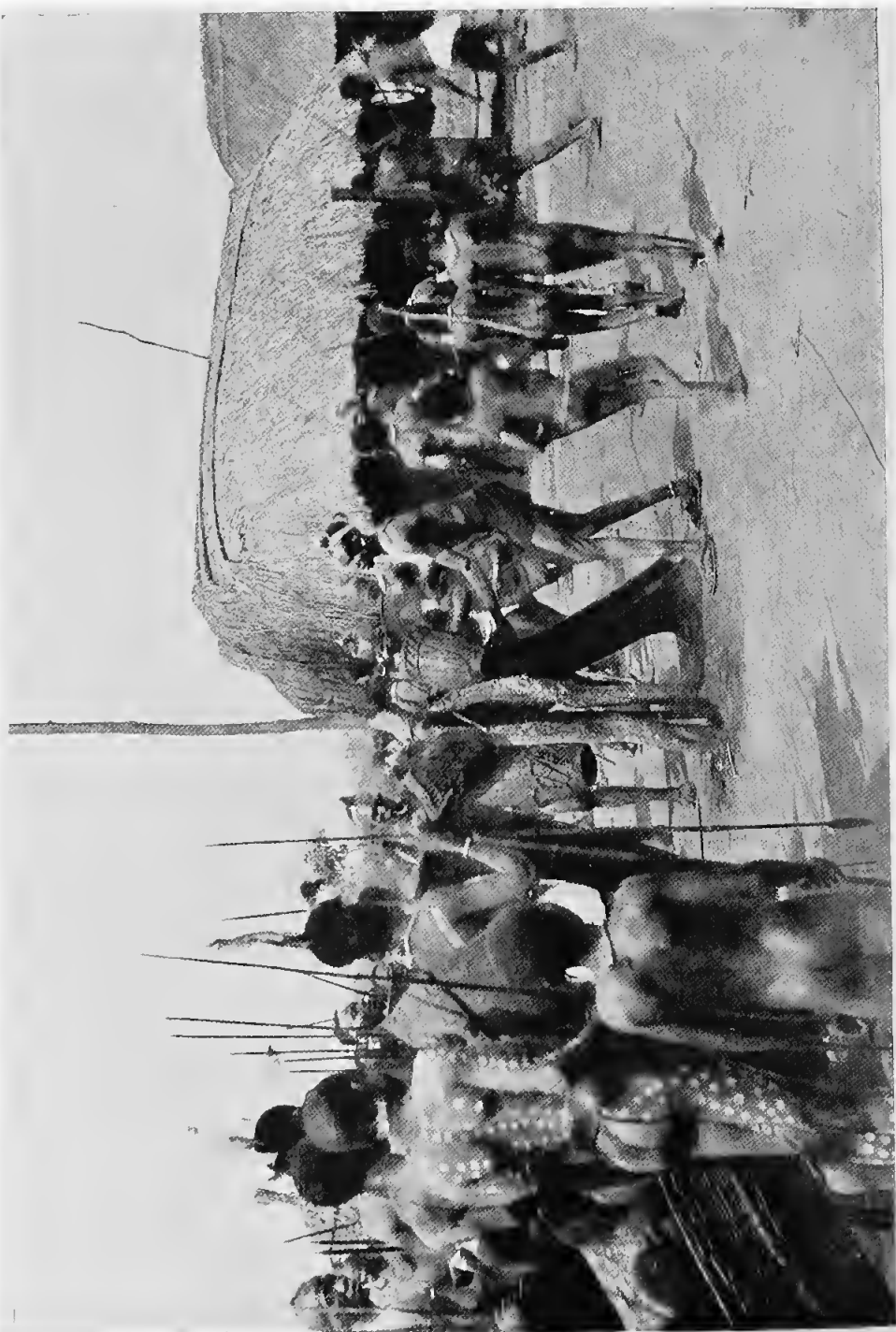
When other pastimes fail the African boy, there is always something to kill. Snares may be set for guinea-fowl at the gaps and paths opening on to a grain field ; traps for little birds may be made, and snares for rats are a necessity, too, around Teso villages. A favourite amusement with Teso boys is to turn out in a party of six or seven up to a dozen and hunt rats in the potato plots. Much damage is done to the vines and their tubers by the vast numbers of rodents in the district, so that good is done by hunting them as well as an afternoon's entertainment gained. The rats are of all sizes and colours, parti-coloured in stripes of fawn and chocolate, black and grey ; but all come alike

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

to the youthful hunters, provided they meet their death in the open; no rat caught in a house is eaten, but all others help to make a stew for the refreshment of the hunters, or can be sold to some one for a small basket of nuts. So up and down the plot of potatoes the boys go beating and slashing until a rat is scared from its hole, when all is excitement and wild hitting with sticks until the wretched fugitive is dispatched and dropped lifeless into the basket. An hour of this sort of thing will generally fill a small basket with a bag of thirty or forty rats, but no amount of hunting seems to have any effect in diminishing the countless hordes that swarm in every field and village.

Gan' boys do not condescend to such small game, but they are always ready to join in a hunt or tracking expedition, each priding himself in being able to distinguish between the hoof marks of the various antelope; no disgrace would be so humiliating as to mistake a water-buck for a haarte-beest, or announce the recent passage of reed-buck, when looking at the trail of a few goats. As a result all men in Patiko are excellent trackers, and love nothing more than to take a white man up within shot of some herd of antelope, which had perhaps been quite invisible to him until the moment came for shooting. They know no fatigue as long as there is game ahead, and even when marching never fail to note every footmark that gives indication of the presence of a wild beast in the vicinity; very rarely are they at fault as to the





A GAN' DANCE IN FULL SWING.

(See p. 231.)

## Pastimes

age of the footprint, and the direction likely to have been taken by any particular animal.

While the Bantu tribes of Uganda assemble in their chief's courtyard for social intercourse or public business, the Gan' and Teso people reserve their assemblies mostly for dances. In Teso dancing is often associated with drinking, unless it has a religious import; among the Baganda and Banyoro most dances are too obscene, or at any rate too suggestive, to be countenanced where Christianity is in the least degree acknowledged and professed. In Patiko the dance is the equivalent of athletic games in England such as football or cricket, seriously undertaken and carried out in an orderly manner. Costume is of the highest importance and carefully elaborated, as described on page 190; strong drink is conspicuous by its absence, and indeed the physical exertion undergone during one of these big dances is too great to admit of anything that would tend to diminish the powers of endurance of the participators.

On a pole set up in the middle of the ground are hung two or three drums, as seen on the page opposite; to the accompaniment of these, vigorously beaten with the hands by some of the dancers, who take it in turn to perform this necessary duty, a chant is sung without cessation, the same words being repeated over and over again.<sup>1</sup> The main body of the dancers divide into two parties, one of which marks time and sustains the chorus, while the other performs the figures

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of chapter.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of the dance. These consist of movements like warlike charges, rapid circuits of the ground in line of fours, back and forward sweeps, and now and then a period of leaping up and down in the same spot, shields and spears being at the same time brandished over head. One party having concluded a series of movements, they take up the chorus while the previous singers carry out the same or similar figures, after which the drums cease for a few minutes while all rest. But never for long; fresh drummers take the place of the old ones, and immediately the whole performance is again in full swing, may be with a fresh chorus; and so on till the sun sinks low and all are nearly exhausted. Meanwhile from time to time warriors in twos or threes have been detaching themselves temporarily from the companies, and making little excursions in warlike manner around the dancing-ground. They dash forward and spear imaginary adversaries, retreat, advance again with caution in a crouching attitude, draw back once more, only to end with a final rush and return to the dance with triumphant waving of their arms and exultant yells. Single warriors may also be seen to separate themselves from the dance, and make circuit after circuit of the ground followed by a train of women or girls. Each of them carries a wand or walking-stick, which she brandishes in imitation of her chosen warrior, as she pursues him on his way through the haze of dust that envelopes the scene.

Imported games make, with one exception, a limited appeal to the African. Cricket has been



## Pastimes

tried in several mission stations, but I never heard of its being a success anywhere. The black boy does not see the good of endangering his fingers and shins by the impact of a hard ball for amusement; if it were inevitable, that would be another matter, but to get in the way of an object that you know will hurt you, just because it is the custom of the game seems to him essentially absurd. He just declines to play. Hockey makes better way in some places; you at any rate do not have the ball aimed at you, and the larger area gives better opportunities for avoiding injury. But football is a game which seems to make universal appeal to every black boy and man; it needs little apparatus, bare feet are not an impossible handicap, and the endless supply of physical energy engendered by many hunts or by long journeys on foot more than compensates for the booted feet of the European. Whatever be the reason, the game makes instant progress everywhere in Uganda, much to the advantage of Europeans on lonely stations, who find it difficult to get exercise with recreation at a small cost. Even after suffering some small injury to his feet, such as a sprained toe, a boy will always go back and play again at the earliest opportunity; he may go to the ground with the intention of being a spectator, but, as one boy once said to me, "the game makes you join in," whether you will or no.

European music is an enigma to the raw native, and consequently makes no impression upon him. Rarely can a boy, even when he is familiar with a

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

tune in church, distinguish it when played upon an organ, unless perhaps it be slowly picked out with a solitary finger. The only English records on the phonograph that appealed at all were laughing songs and pieces containing a passage on the bugle or cornet; for the latter are familiar as used by the native troops, and the former is the same all the world over. It was always amusing to watch the change that came over a ring of stolid faces when the first notes of a native song succeeded some unappreciated English piece; astonishment blended with delight, and I was more than once told that the audience were prepared to "listen to that all day."

### NOTE A.

A sample of a flute solo is here given, played by a boy in Mwenge :—

Flute.



$\mathbb{R}^n$   
 $f'$

$\mathbb{R}$

$\mathbb{R}$



GAN' BRAVES DECKED OUT FOR A DANCE, AND FULLY ARMED,

# Pastimes

## NOTE B.

A very favourite song for these dances referred to the visit of the first missionaries, one of whom rode a bicycle. The words run : “ Kanalela woto ki tyene? Kanalela rin’o kene ; Mono guro kema wi Keyu ” ( “ Does the iron donkey walk with its feet? The iron donkey runs of itself ; the white man has pitched his tent on Mount Keyu ” ). Another ditty used on the way home from the fields gives the details of a little flirtation : “ Awobi mako bad añira ; Igweño cin’a? Iya cwer. Añira gicono, kwer ; gimito won dyan’ ; in lacan.” Of which the English is, “ The youth takes the girl’s hand. Do you take my hand? I don’t want you. They court the girls, all in vain ; they want some one with cows, you are a poor man.”

So the poor suitor has to retire discomfited, not having the wherewithal to get married.

The words sung to the air given below run as follows :—

“ Obura odon’ kwene? cen’ Mono neko woko ;  
Min oñuto cogo ; woda odon’ kwene? ”

Which may be rendered :—

“ What has become of Obura? the white man killed him ;  
His mother shows his bones ; where has my son got to? ”

Men’s Song.

*Andante.*



## CHAPTER XIV

### SICKNESS AND DEATH

“And the measure of our torment is the measure of our youth.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE attitude of the African mind towards sickness and death is a compound of dread and fatalism, of fear and folly. The average native spends much time, effort, and property in endeavouring to avert vague ills that he believes to threaten him on every hand from the machinations of evil spirits and other beings of hostile inclination. But at the same time he runs heedlessly into obvious dangers with his eyes open. It has even been necessary at times for sentries to be placed at convenient watering-places on rivers where crocodiles are numerous, because so many women and children have been dragged off, and their surviving friends and relatives prefer the risk of the near watering-place with which they are familiar to the extra trouble involved in going to another which is safe and farther off. When once in the grip of the foe the African resigns himself to the inevitable, much like many of the poor in England; the probabilities of recovery or

## Sickness and Death

speedy release by death are openly discussed in the presence of the patient, who may join in the argument or sit in despairing silence. A woman who was brought into our dispensary with a badly burnt hand, which was almost gangrenous, developed lockjaw the next day. When her husband came to see how she fared he was told that nothing could be done to save her, and decided to take her home there and then ; they had a distance of ten or more miles to go, and, he explained, it would be better to get her home while she could still walk, as he did not want the expense of men to carry her when dead. The wife gave consent by her silence, and the poor creature departed quite unconcerned to walk home and die.

When attempts at treatment are made they are usually the exact reverse of what is rational and beneficial, at least in the case of any ailment that is under the surface and not due to some obvious cause, such as the breaking of a limb by a fall or in a fight. The reason at the bottom is that all disease is ascribed to supernatural agencies, or at least to causes beyond the sufferer's control. Hygiene is consequently at a discount and superstitious practices at a premium. If the sickness is ascribed to the enmity of a supernatural being, resort must be had to sacrifice or other means of propitiation ; if some enemy is supposed to be responsible, advice must be sought as to the most efficacious way of defeating his malicious endeavours. Hence the hanging of grass ropes from house to house all round a village to keep off

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

lightning, and the erection of arches of sticks at the entrance to a village to ward off epidemics of smallpox or other infectious diseases.

The production of disease in an enemy is a favourite form of revenge, and it is supposed that much can be done in this way if good advice is taken from some clever medicine-man. Among the Teso people one plan is to collect earth from the footprints of the person to be harmed and to mix it with some medicine procured from some one skilled in such concoctions. The mixture is laid by in a potsherd, and the feet of the unfortunate enemy will soon begin to mysteriously swell and the skin to peel off. Or suppose that your enemy is already afflicted with loathsome specific disease, you may take a branch of the castor-oil tree and with it beat the place where he has been sitting; the result will be that the disease will become chronic and refuse to get well. The same effect may be produced by taking a scab from a sore on the body of the person to be worked upon and hang it up on a high tree. In consequence of this practice it is noticeable that a sufferer from any disease that produces sores is always very careful not to allow such scabs to remain on the ground, but will throw them into the fire; so, after all, hygiene is practised in some minute particulars as a result of superstitious usages.

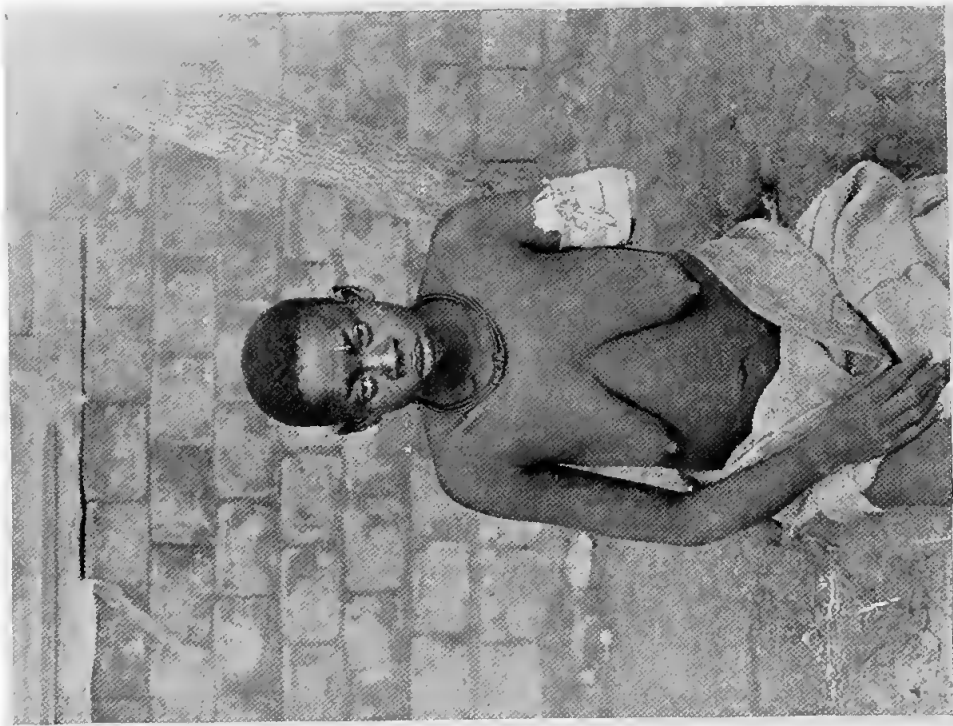
If no enemy is suspected of a malicious intent, an ailment may be ascribed to the eating of one's *totem*, such as sheep or some kind of antelope. On one occasion two or three boys came to me with







A TESO WITCH-DOCTOR.



AN AMATEUR OPERATION.

## Sickness and Death

the same symptoms in each case, and each describing his sickness as due to "haartebeest." At first I was puzzled to know why the meat of that particular antelope should be supposed to bring on an attack of indigestion, until my dispensary boy explained to me that this animal was the *totem* of these boys, who ought therefore to have avoided it as food. Any mysterious disease is usually said to be due to Edeke, who appears to be the most powerful being known to the Teso; it is most baffling often in dispensary to have all one's inquiries as to symptoms met with the dreary response "Edeke." Hence the constant resort to the conjuring medicine-man, who can perform a cure with incantations or by the use of charms find out the cause of the illness. These men may often be distinguished by the fact that they dress as women and put on women's ornaments; from the picture on page 239 it can be seen that the heavy chains of beads and shells resemble those worn by the women and girls as on page 65 while the tucking of the cloth up under the armpits is also a feminine fashion. To the same cause are due the idiotic mistakes made in the application of European remedies; if there is an evil spirit to be expelled or some malign influence to be counteracted, then the quicker it is done the better, and naturally the more medicine you take at a time the more powerful the effect will be. The obvious thing to do is to drink off at a draught the mixture the white man said was to last for five days, or if it be ointment to plaster on the whole supply

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

immediately and cover it up with the bit of newspaper in which it was wrapped.

The fixed rule of the medicine-man is payment first and treatment afterwards; not until a fowl or goat or even a bullock has been given can any measures possibly be taken for the relief of the patient; perhaps it would be better for the patient in many instances if he were unable to afford the fee, as the treatment is in most cases, to say the least unsavoury, and of course entirely futile. A goat may perhaps be killed, the dung smeared over the face and breast of the sick person, the spleen burnt in the fireplace, and then the meat consumed by the assembled relatives and friends, the tit-bits being the natural perquisite of the wizard. On another occasion the victim may be a black and white fowl, which is killed and the feathers carefully collected. A little devil hut is built and the feathers stuck all over it, while inside the hut are placed offerings of food to Edeke. Or the operations of the wizard may be directed to discovering the reason for the illness, and take the form of reading the omens from the entrails of the beast that is slaughtered. The outfit of a medicine-man in Mwenge was once seized by a chief and given to me as a curiosity; it consisted of horns of antelope, buffalo, and goats, filled with various "medicines," compounded mostly of blood and pounded leaves. The most important item was a bag of goatskin, about a foot long and half that width, sewn tightly up all round. Inside were a few common pebbles, by the rattling of which the

## Sickness and Death

wizard pretended that he could receive communications from the spirit-world.

One of our native clergy in Toro, by name Apolo Kivebulaya, a devoted and energetic worker, was the son of one of these wizards, and he gave me a description of how his father used to go to work; often he had carried apparatus for his father similar to that which I had presented to me. The medicine-man is perhaps called in to find out the reason of some mysterious illness in a family. He enters the house, calls first of all for a goat to be slaughtered, and after consulting the entrails and making a more than hearty meal off the flesh, announces that it is a difficult case and can only be pronounced upon in the morning after a night's deliberation. The time thus gained he occupies in preparing the ground for to-morrow's proceedings; during the hours of darkness when all but himself are safely asleep he will creep out of the house, dig a small hole near the back wall, conceal something, and return to his bed after carefully replacing the earth and obliterating all traces of his operations. In the morning the séance begins; the bag of pebbles is produced and a tour of the premises made. At each separate part of the house the wizard pauses to investigate; he rattles his bag and listens carefully for the meaning of the sound. Under the beds?—no poison there; under the ashes in the fireplace?—nothing to be found; behind the baskets?—drawn blank again; at the back of the mud partition?—still the spirit replies, "There is nothing here!" At length a move is

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

made outside, and after a few more failures in the courtyard the wizard reaches the spot at the back which he visited in the night. Here the spirit speaks (in the rattling pebbles!) with no uncertain voice: "The danger is here." The anxious relatives hasten to fetch a spear and with the ferule dig up the soil. Sure enough, there beneath the surface is a goat's horn filled with "medicine," to which the wizard triumphantly points as the *fons et origo mali*. Having taken the dangerous object, which he asserts has been buried by some enemy in order to bewitch the family, and pretended in some way to neutralise the poisonous effect, he departs with his fee in goats or other desirable property to find some other gullible victim.

Poisoning in various forms is very frequently given as the cause of illness, and is actually practised with only too effectual skill in many cases. In Patiko I was assured that not infrequently people died from contact with the *logaga*; this is a poison trap set at the entrance to a village, and supposed to be such that only the person whose life or health is aimed at is in any danger of its virulence. The mere contact of the bare foot is sufficient to convey the poison, and no attempt is made to introduce any spike or sharp edge to cut the skin; the victim of the trap is expected to fall ill and even die without knowing the reason for his fate. In the case of a big chief named Awin who died mysteriously near to us in Patiko, the fatal dose was supposed to have been conveyed by a live fowl, of which others partook as well as





EXTRACTING AN EYELASH ; TORO DISPENSARY.



## Sickness and Death

the chief himself. There seemed to be no doubt that the fowl was sent as a present by one who was an enemy of Awin, but we never fathomed the mystery as to how poison could be conveyed in such a manner. The woman whose funeral is shown in the frontispiece was also the victim of poison; in this case the murderer was a near relative, who blew some sort of powder or liquid made from the leaves of a plant up the nostrils of the woman, who was stated to have fallen dead immediately. I examined the corpse at the time the photo was taken, but could discover no symptoms that would indicate the nature of the poison.

A common form of treatment of the sick, based on the supposition of supernatural causes, is the use of incantation and singing, with or without dancing. Sometimes the services of a witch-doctor are requisitioned to direct the performance; in Toro a medium is frequently called in, who becomes possessed by the particular spirit which she affects and goes into a sort of ecstasy. This was the case in the scene at Bura referred to in Chapter V. In the Teso country only the relatives and friends of the sick person take part in the exorcism, which usually takes the form of a dance, to the accompaniment of drum beating. On page 267 is a picture of one of these cures by dancing and incantation. Seated on the ground in the shade of the branch planted in the soil is an old man, before whom are set up two drums. One of these is the biggest procurable and the other the smallest that can be

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

obtained, and they are beaten alternately, two quick strokes on the big one being followed by two sharp taps on the tiny one. The latter is tuned up to the highest possible pitch by warming it from time to time over the fire which is kept burning on the man's left-hand side, with a cooking-pot on it. As he thumps away, "pom-pom, pip-pip; pom-pom, pip-pip," while the perspiration pours down him in streams, he sings a chant that boasts of no words, or only one or two occasionally, the rest being a long-drawn "a-a-a-a." Before him in the wide courtyard, in this case that of a big chief named Njala, dance the patient and her friends; the former is the figure in front of the rest dancing by herself, the latter are her fellow-wives of the chief Njala. Behind the old man, squatting in the meagre strip of shade afforded by the branch, are some boys, doubtless taking notes of the correct way to beat the drum and maintain the chant, while at the same time they consume some of their abundant leisure. The performance probably continues two or three hours a day for several days before the cure is effected. Whenever this weird collocation of drums, the shrill and the deep, is heard in a Teso village, one knows that the treatment of a sick person is proceeding. Or at other times one may hear a swishing, rattling sound coming from within the euphorbia fence. You bend down and wriggle beneath the archway and find perhaps two women only sitting, hung in every part of their anatomy with trailing creepers and fringes of leaves; one, with dull endurance of the pain that racks her,

## Sickness and Death

crouches in a huddled position and takes note of nothing, while her companion swings round and round in her hand a gourd full of dried peas. Heedless of the blazing sun, which climbs above the fence and trees and should warn her that the hour has come for the midday meal to be cooked, careless of the presence of the white man with his camera, there she sits and rattles with a persistence and faith that might be admirable were she engaged in some occupation that could be of benefit to the patient.

Actual medical and surgical treatment are not, however, totally neglected; occasionally they may be even rational and beneficial. A woman was once brought to me in Patiko, with her arm broken in a drunken brawl. It was carefully done up in a splint, made of small, straight twigs strung together in a row, so as to form a stiff, but flexible, bandage, which had the appearance of a fine grid. This was primitive, but quite effective, though the bone had not been set in a straight line, and in time the pressure of the bare sticks on the flesh would have been sure to produce sores. A small-pox patient from the same village was immediately isolated by orders of the chief, without any instructions from a European, and an epidemic undoubtedly avoided in consequence. The person had occupied a hut apart from the village proper, being already segregated, according to the Gan' custom, as being a sufferer from a loathsome, contagious disease. A traveller from across the border coming into the village was suspected of being ill

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

with smallpox, which is much dreaded, owing to the fearful mortality experienced in a previous outbreak. So the stranger was made to sleep in the hut with the isolated person, and there died; the only person to take the smallpox was the occupant of the hut.

Cupping is a common remedy for pains in the head or back; it is carried out by means of a goat's horn with the tip cut off, the air being exhausted by suction through the resulting orifice. Unfortunately, the bleeding is usually practised on patients already feeble for want of blood, rarely on those of full habit of life, who could afford to lose a little. The idea that it is good to let out a little bad blood is also held, and the heads of tiny babies are sometimes to be seen covered with little cuts, some of which may develop into bad ulcers, owing to the employment of a dirty knife; this is a favourite remedy for children suffering from pernicious anæmia, who consequently can least spare any of the precious fluid.

The plasters employed for burns or other sores are generally just wrong; if there is a discharge that ought to be washed away, a leaf is tightly fitted over the place, and the edges so pressed down as to make an airtight cover. A burn may be covered with a plaster of rats'-dung; a certain kind of yellow earth is considered in the Mwenge district to be a good application for the troublesome and common complaint called *buhere*, or the itch. But the most foolish of all, perhaps, is one which recalls some of the superstitions in vogue

## Sickness and Death

among English country folk. The Teso people say that the best way to get rid of a wart is to rub it hard by moonlight when you hear a hyæna howl!

For the most part it is only after they have tried one of these native forms of treatment that the people come to our dispensary for medicine, and consequently many of them come too late. After being treated for bronchitis with incantations and plasters of dung a man may be brought to us with pneumonia well developed and die in a few hours. Or a small abrasion on the shin, caused by a fall on to a sharp root, only comes to us three weeks later as a sloughing sore so offensive that even the other patients waiting for treatment flee out of the dressing-room. A woman who has been bitten on the middle finger by a snake waits until her whole arm is swollen and peeling, and, though her life is not in danger, she loses her finger. It is only after they have found by experience that English methods and drugs are more efficacious than dancing and incantations that the people come to us at once and so make cure more easy. The more enlightened, such as the Baganda agents of the Government, are always urging the more ignorant Teso, for instance, to come quickly and get medicine, instead of wasting goats and sheep on thievish wizards. But the force of habit and long association is too great to be easily overcome.

Another hindrance to cure is the fatal idea that if sick persons have no appetite they may be allowed to go without nourishment of any sort until they

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

ask for it ! A little boy who had been badly clawed by a leopard all over his back lost his life from this cause. I had sewn up the wounds and all was progressing favourably when I heard that the child was dead. Inquiry elicited the fact that since the accident the child had had nothing to eat and did not like milk, which I had been sending for him, and so was just allowed to die of starvation.

As a rule, however, the black races show extraordinary vitality. A woman was brought to us at N'ora with her left arm in a most terrible condition. Two days before she had been fishing with a sieve at the edge of the water in Lake Nāgwo and been seized by a crocodile just about the elbow. Her companion managed to drive the beast off by jabbing it in the eye with a sharp stick, but the forearm was left hanging to the upper only by the skin and tendons ; the joint was torn clean away, and only the fact that the arteries were not severed saved the woman's life. Two days later, when I first saw her, the limb was of course rapidly decomposing, and nothing could be done to save it ; the woman had had no nourishment since the accident, but was able to walk into the dispensary after being helped out of the improvised hammock in which her husband and brothers had brought her from their home. There she sat on the floor, in apparent indifference, while the question of amputation was discussed between me and the relatives, the old mother being at first most hostile to the idea of operation. At length consent was given, the patient was received into our little ward,





CHIEF OBONA, WHOSE FUNERAL IS DESCRIBED ON PAGE 254.

The boy sitting on the ground is a Munyoro teacher.



## Sickness and Death

in charge of her mother, while the husband departed home to bring in food for her. Next morning we removed the arm under chloroform, and for some time the patient progressed favourably; when the wound had almost healed I took the photograph on page 239. Then suddenly and mysteriously the woman died, probably owing to the formation of a clot of blood, much to our sorrow and disappointment; but we were glad to find that the relatives did not ascribe the death to any mismanagement or want of skill on the part of the amateur surgical staff. The mother explained that an enemy of the family had been near when the accident first happened, and was suspected or seen to have collected some of the blood after the injured woman left the spot; this blood, no doubt, he had treated with some medicine and procured the woman's death.

Another case which bore witness to the vitality of the African was that of a soldier at the Government station at Kumi, eleven miles from N'ora. The house in which he was sleeping, or rather ought to have been sleeping, was set on fire in a row, due, as usual, to drink. Fearful of the consequences if his rifle were missing, this man dashed back through the flames, with drunken recklessness, to save it; the flames swept round him and burnt almost his entire body. When I saw him next morning he was nearly the colour of a European; only on his face and one leg and arm was any appreciable area of black skin remaining. It took the best part of an hour to swathe him in bandages

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of lint and vaseline, and the official in charge then sent him off on his own camp-bed to the nearest doctor, thirty-five miles away. Owing to the care of this official, Mr. E. G. Morris, and to early dressing of the burns the man fortunately recovered, only to serve a term in gaol for the offence that caused his injury.

As a rule I found that the more fuss was made about a sick person, the less there was the matter with him. When a man rolls about in the agonies of intestinal pains, due to mere passing indigestion, his relatives think he must be full to the brim with snakes or spirits, and the call for medical assistance is urgent, and the description of symptoms vivid in the extreme. On the other hand, when a person lies quiet and complains of nothing, and is in fact too weak to move at all, then it is supposed there is not much the matter, and no trouble is taken to get help until the patient is about moribund. I was once called in Butiti to see a man who was said to be swollen all over; supposing it to be a case of snake-bite I inquired what sort of snake it was, but was assured that none had touched him. It proved on examination to be an ordinary case of malaria, and no sign of swelling was apparent anywhere on the man's body; he had said he was swollen all over, no doubt feeling the tension of a hot, dry skin in fever, and they had just taken his word for it.

Much variation of practice exists between the different tribes of Uganda in the method of burial and the mode of mourning a departed relative or

## Sickness and Death

friend. In Mwenge a wild lamentation is immediately set up by the nearest female relative, shrill, and unrestrained, but not long sustained. Death seems to make but little impression on the majority, and but little formality is observed at funerals. Only it is important that cloth should be used for the wrapping of the corpse, even though it be the body of a stillborn infant. A wealthy person is buried in many folds of new barkcloth, and quantities of new cloths and even rolls of new calico are thrown into the grave. This practice is being discouraged now in Christian burials, as a needless display and unworthy ostentation.

Among the Teso people mourning is carried to a most extravagant length. As soon as a person is seen to be dead, the relatives set up a wailing chant and a chorus of wild weeping and lamentation, which brings to the village all that are within earshot. The news travels quickly and every one who claimed acquaintance with the deceased person comes to join in the dismal uproar. The corpse is buried, almost immediately after death, inside the house, near the doorway, in a sitting posture, and the lamentation is carried on in the courtyard outside, only one or two of the nearest of kin sitting in the house by the graveside. Among the mourners there are always some to be seen with their arms or legs tied; some sitting in the grip of a male friend, or restrained by two or three women. This is because it is considered proper to show your grief by attempting to commit suicide, if you are connected in any way with the deceased.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

People have been known to impale themselves on stakes, to hurl themselves upon spears or dash their heads on a rock. Another may hang himself, or rupture his larynx by a sharp blow upon the edge of an *erite*, or winnowing tray. At one funeral I saw the son of the local chief being held back by three or four men, as he strained madly to reach the village, with tears streaming down his cheeks. At the funeral which is shown in the frontispiece, the corpse has for some reason not been yet interred, perhaps because it is a case of poisoning and inspection may be necessary by some messenger from the chief. It will be noticed that the old mother is seated by her dead daughter, while a friend has her arms round the old lady to restrain her transports of grief. The old woman at the left of the picture in front, with another holding her arm, had just been dashing herself on the ground in the clear space seen, when I was arranging the camera, and indeed I had to wait till she had been composed before the exposure could be made. Just as I was coming away a loud crack behind me made me turn sharp round, and there was one of our own house-boys, no doubt a relative of the dead woman, dashing himself upon a rock and rolling frantically upon the ground. Several women at once rushed to him and held him firmly to prevent a repetition of the frenzy.

It is difficult to decide whether this frantic exhibition of sorrow is in any way genuine or not. Doubtless there is great exaggeration, and few

## Sickness and Death

would dream of going so far as actual suicide even if not prevented. At the same time, many mourners have the tears pouring down their cheeks, and cases of suicide are not unknown. There is very likely a modicum of grief, which is magnified into wild despair by a desire to avoid any suspicion of having been concerned in the death of the person lamented, either by poison or some form of witchcraft. At any rate the danger is considered so great that the death of a relative is not announced in specific terms, but the deceased person is said to be ill, and the news thus broken first gradually.

In the case of the death of twins, they are not said to have died, but to have flown up to heaven. Like a person who has died by the stroke of lightning, twins are not buried in the village, but in some forest and beside a stream. In the grave is placed a pot with three mouths, filled with millet, and other offerings are added as credulity may suggest.

In the Patiko district the dead are buried in the hut lately occupied by them, as in Teso, and no difference is made by the survivors in their occupation of the dwelling. In Teso any hut with a grave in it is not pulled down and removed when the inhabitants of the village move to a fresh site, but the building is allowed to remain and fall down of old age. In Patiko, when a chief died, his house was kept standing where he was buried, while the remainder of the village moved to a fresh site; the heir lived on in the old house for the space of a year from the death, holding periodical dances

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

to which the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages came to show their respect for the dead man. In the case of the death of an unimportant person the dance was held just on one day, and no further ceremonies were thought necessary.

An important funeral was celebrated in Patiko just before we left the district, that of the old chief Obona, whose portrait is seen on page 249. According to custom, he was interred in the house he had been last using, and the grave was heaped up with all his household utensils, at least those that were nearing their dissolution by age; there would be no need to worship custom to the extent of sacrificing sound cooking-pots or new pipes. By way of tombstone, a piece of white calico was stretched over the side of the house where the grave lay, while the addition of a couple of drums testified to the dignity of him who was gone. To the courtyard outside gathered parties of men and women from every village that had owned the sway of Obona during his lifetime, and now that he was dead hoped for the favour of his heir. All day long we could hear the shrill cries of the women mourning and the rise and fall of the dirges as they gave the time for the figures of the funeral dance. Now and again the explosion of guns indicated the arrival of a fresh party of mourners, who came rushing at full speed into the midst of the assembly, waving their spears and shields above their heads and discharging their old muskets into the air. For about a week the celebrations continued, and were then intermitted to





FUNERAL DANCE IN HONOUR OF CHIEF OBONA.

(See p. 254)



GRAVE OF CHIEF OBONA.

(See p. 254)



## Sickness and Death

be resumed at intervals at the summons of the heir until the full time of mourning should be fulfilled, and he could move to his new village. Some of the dirges used by the Patiko women are quite tuneful, and the most musical of the songs of which I was able to get phonograph records. The air of one of these laments is given here :—

### Women's Song.

*Andante.*



### CHORUS.

*f*



## CHAPTER XV

### SUPERSTITION

“To the superstitious man the object of all worship is to induce the supernatural being to go away. Credulity and reverence seldom flourish together.”

WHILE some tribes in Uganda may be said to know God in a certain sense, and to look and pray to a supreme Being, whose influence is expected to be benign and helpful, the religion of the majority is of the order described in the sentence quoted above from the *Spectator*. It consists largely, in common parlance, of dodging the evil spirits. There is little sense of personality about the supernatural beings, but a great idea of their power for evil; there is a vague dread, but no reverence; there is a constant making of offerings, but no love. At the same time some of the supernatural powers may be persuaded to be kind, if rightly approached, and may be looked to for the material blessings of life, such as cows and good crops.

Among the Banyamwenge each *mucwezi*, or demon, has its own symbol, and this symbol is carried by any person who is *mbandwa*, or medium, to that demon. It may be a little stick of dried

## Superstition

papyrus stem, hung round one end with a few strings of red and blue beads ; it may be a bunch of a certain wild flower, such as the wild mint ; or it may be a spear decorated with a wreath of creeper. The medium who is being possessed by that demon for the purpose of divination must carry the wand appropriate to it. The way in which the demons are looked to for aid is indicated in the local proverb, "*Omucwezi njuna, namaguru gawe galoho*," of which a free translation is, " Help me, demon ! and put your shoulder to the wheel " ; the idea being that " God helps those that help themselves." Some notion of prayer is here indicated, although the people have no word for it except the common word for to "ask," and no word for to "worship" except one meaning to do respectful homage to any superior.

A ceremony which seems to bear a closer resemblance to real worship used to be performed in Toro each new moon, and we once witnessed a reminiscence of it by the invitation of the King of Toro, Daudi Kasagama. It was the occasion of King Edward's coronation in 1902, and in far away Toro the news had not reached us that the King was ill and the ceremony postponed. So the event was celebrated by a dinner-party, to which King Daudi was invited, after which he conducted us up to his residence on the top of Kabarole through lines of torch-bearers. Out in the moonlight we found chairs set in the courtyard before the palace, and we sat and enjoyed the cool air while the two national bands performed their

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

patriotic airs, one of which was *not* "God Save the King." Songs followed by some of the performers, in praise of the monarch and his guests ; then the King asked if we would like to see the ceremony of *okuguruka ngoma*, which in the old days used to be performed by the King and all his chiefs at each new moon, a kind of worship of the Queen of Heaven. The band struck up anew, the drums alone taking part, and then the chiefs present, in number about eight or more, commenced a sort of Highland fling, jumping from one foot to the other, and then high into the air off both feet at once. It was evident that they were much hampered by their civilised garments ; in the olden time they would have been clad in skins ; but the revival was interesting to those whose teaching had been largely responsible for the neglect of the old custom.

As in Mwenge, so in Patiko, the character and power of the demons are regarded as widely varying. Añodo is the name of one whom the Gan' people regard as very beneficent ; Omodogagi, or the "shell-eater," is not so good a character. Adude is as a rule very hostile ; he walks about at night, and if he assails a person when no *ajwaka*, or witch-doctor, is available, then that person is sure to die. If, on the other hand, a person is ill, and calls in a wizard to his aid, and the patient trembles all over at the incantations, then Adude is said to be present auspiciously and the patient recovers.

To these various demons offerings are made by

## Superstition

the Gan' people in different forms and places ; in every village are to be seen tiny huts of grass into which may be introduced small presents of food, such as eggs or morsels of cooked millet porridge. But little importance appears to be attached to these offerings, which may be removed on occasion ; I once asked a friend of mine for eggs to purchase, and he had none for sale, but readily fetched one which had been put into a hut as a demon offering and gave it to me. No fear of evil consequences was apparent. In the same vague fashion sacrifices are offered to demons on the rocks that abound throughout the district ; the spot usually preferred is one where there is a hole in which dwells a snake. The demon, so I was informed, is supposed to reside in the body of the snake, a statement which has a decidedly Biblical flavour, although there was no suspicion of Christian knowledge about my informant. But when I inquired what became of the food offered in this way, and whether it was consumed by the snake, the naïve reply was given that it was subsequently eaten by the offerers !

An offering of this description may be made to exorcise some ghostly visitant, as in the case referred to on page 75, or in order to obtain some benefit desired. Sometimes a thankoffering may be made after the birth of twins, or perhaps it should be rather called a propitiatory sacrifice to avert the evil consequences likely to follow upon so unusual an event. One such I came across which had been in the form of a small quantity

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of beer offered in a pot of special construction, having three mouths, and holding about a pint. The pot had been left on the rock, the beer being long since consumed or spilt; no one would touch or remove the pot, as part of a sacrifice, until I picked it up to examine it. Just as when St. Paul handled the viper, it was apparently expected that I should come to a sudden and violent end, but nothing happening one of my boys took heart and said, "Why should we be afraid? We are God's people now;" and he took the pot into his hand, and subsequently carried it home for me, the consent of the villagers having been first obtained. In this case no value seemed to be attached to the pot itself, but fear of evil consequences deterred all from touching it. If any one was so rash as to take it away, they had no objection to make.

Among the Bakeni the same kind of little demon huts is to be seen, erected near the houses on the sudd. A favourite finish to these huts is a two-horned peak, as seen in the illustration on page 13; probably this pattern is copied from Nilotic neighbours, as it is common among the Gan'.

Another method of keeping away evil spirits is to plant thorn bushes beside the doorway of the hut; a tree which has thorns two inches long is most used for this purpose, and when dry the branches go nearly white, and in twilight are apt to look somewhat ghostly. The arches erected at the entrance to a village to ward off infectious disease have been referred to elsewhere; like the





PRAYING TO AMON'I FOR RAIN,

(See p. 262.)



## Superstition

three-mouthed pot they are carefully avoided by any one approaching the village.

The religion of the Teso people seems based on even more vague ideas than that of the Gan' tribe. The most often-mentioned supernatural personage, and apparently the one with the most power, is Edeke, who seems to occupy a position more or less unique among the demons held in awe by this people. He may be prayed to for food or for rain, but only in the sense that he is angry and must be besought to let his suppliants off, as it were. I could never discover that any good attributes are ascribed to him, and we have therefore abandoned the use of the word Edeke as a translation of " God " ! The word for " to be ill " being very similar, viz., *adeka*, and disease being constantly attributed to the action of Edeke, there is probably some connection between the two, though such is disclaimed by the people themselves.

One of the chief Teso observances is "*aremoni Edeke*," or to offer sacrifice to Edeke. If, for instance, the crops are doing badly a mess of porridge may be cooked at the side of a field, and then broken up and scattered about the paths leading to the plot of land. Or ashes may be used to sprinkle the paths in the same way. On another occasion parties of people may be seen perambulating the roads of the neighbourhood with torches in their hands, and constantly shrilling out the alarm cry known by the Baganda as *endulu*.

Inferior beings are also appealed to by song

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

and dance. There was recently a witch-doctress by name Amon'i, to whom great powers and influence were ascribed. When she died she had a "state" funeral, being buried with every honour in a special fenced-in courtyard, by the side of one of the main roads. Offerings are carried to the grave and sacrifices made at the spot. One dry season, when the rains were long in breaking, we heard a great noise of singing, and found that it proceeded from a party of some fifty women and girls, with a few young men among them, who were dancing along the roads for miles round about our station, chanting to Amon'i a prayer for rain. All were decked in wreaths and streamers of climbing plants, and carried in their hands wands of the feathery papyrus plant. Some also held gourds full of dried peas, which they rattled incessantly by way of accompaniment to the chanting. The old man seen in front of the dancers, on page 261, acted as leader of the chorus, and led off afresh after each pause the words of the following refrain:—

"Amon'i, kimoñi syo edowu, a-a-a-a ;  
Edowu kiryono, a-a-a-a ;"

with other variable lines interspersed between the repetitions of—

"Amon'i, we cry to thee for rain."

Apart from the regular acts of propitiation practised from time to time as occasion demands, there are innumerable little trifles of superstition

## Superstition

which enter into every department of daily life. If a dog runs up on to the roof of a house in Mwenge, that house must be at once vacated, and not again occupied. In Patiko if you wish to make your hens lay plenty of eggs, you take half a dozen egg-shells, pass a small stick through them, and plant them above the doorway of your house. Among the Teso, if a potter finds his pots are cracking unduly in the baking, he at once takes steps to counteract this tendency by throwing into the hole from which he digs his clay a young chicken.

Many of these superstitions gather round the dread of the ever-threatening lightning flash, so destructive to life and property in all tropical Africa. If a village in Patiko has recently suffered, ropes made of twisted grass, like English hay-bands, are strung from peak to peak of the houses throughout the circle of dwellings, to ward off further strokes. If a person has been struck, or badly shaken by a narrow escape, an elaborate cure is performed upon him. A red cock is taken, his tongue torn out, and his body dashed upon the house where the stroke fell. Then the scene changes to the bank of a small running stream, where the patient is made to kneel while the bird is sacrificed over the water. A raw egg is next given to the patient to swallow, and he is laid on his stomach and encouraged to vomit. The lightning is supposed to be vomited along with the egg, and all ill effects prevented.

Among the Banyoro great dread is exhibited of

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

a house which has been struck by lightning. On one occasion I visited a teacher at one of our out-stations called Kicumu. He took me to see the ruins of a house that had recently been burnt out, and explained to me that he alone of all the village had ventured near either during the fire or afterwards. Two women and four goats were in the house when the flash passed down one of the centre posts beside which the women were seated at work peeling potatoes. One of them was torn open down the chest, and both rendered unconscious and unable to fly for their lives. When the teacher arrived on the scene the whole was one mass of flame, in the midst of which were burning the corpses of the women and goats. No one ever approached the ruins except the teacher and his personal boys, and I picked up the knife which one of the women had been using beside the skull of its late owner.

The Teso people make use of bells to exorcise the storm fiend; a person who has been injured by a flash or in the resulting fire wears bells round the ankles for weeks afterwards. Whenever rain threatens, and rain in Uganda almost always comes in company with thunder and lightning, this person will parade the village for an hour, with the jingling bells upon his legs and a wand of papyrus in his hand, attended by as many of his family as may happen to be at hand and not employed in necessary duties. Any one killed outright by lightning is not buried in the house according to the usual custom, but is carried to a distance and interred

## Superstition

beside a stream in some belt of forest. Upon the grave are put all the pots and other household utensils owned by the dead person, and at the door of the hut upon which the stroke fell, now of course a smoking ruin, is planted a sacrifice of hoes which is left for some days. It is interesting to note the efficacy attributed to bells and running water, as in some old European superstitions.

Especial dangers are supposed to attach to the birth of twins, a rare event in an African village. For a month or so after the birth no one except the parents is allowed to come near the infants, as it is thought that their breath would scorch and whiten the skin of any other person. The parents are not permitted to pay a visit outside the village, nor any outsider to enter their own village without first performing the ceremony of *abwatarori*. This is carried out beneath the log archway that spans the entrance to every Teso village. The father and his visitor, or host, as the case may be, kneel opposite to one another beneath this archway, and between them is a bowl containing a paste made of flour and water. The father of twins smears some of this paste over his face and breast, then over the breast and face of the other; after this has been duly carried out the visit can proceed with no fear of evil consequences. This ceremony is also necessary when a girl in her first pregnancy wishes to pay a visit to her father or her uncle, whom she would call father if her real father were dead.

It has already been noted how the African

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

ascribes disease for the most part to supernatural causes ; it should, moreover, be remembered that he regards medicine in the light of a charm, owing its healing properties not to action on the tissues of his body but to power in counteracting spells. Medicine is any concoction which possesses supernatural power, whether for good or evil ; it may be used to produce disease just as much as to relieve it, or to bring about any result not attainable by natural means. In Patiko I was more than once asked for medicine to make dogs fierce ; it was obvious that European dogs were more powerful and better barkers than the miserable curs which haunt native villages ; what was obvious to us but not to the Gan' hunters was the fact that our dogs owed their condition to the regular meals and attention they received, instead of being left to pick up a precarious livelihood on scraps of millet porridge, odds and ends of goatskin, and the pickings of the refuse heaps. In Teso we were also credited with the possession of medicine for making babies white. This came out when one day a chief's wife expressed great astonishment at our little son having a white skin at so youthful a period of his existence as six months old. She had always thought that Europeans were born black like all the babies she had ever seen, and turned white later by the assiduous application of some potent medicine. It was also a matter of curiosity to ascertain whether a white man has legs as white as his face and arms ; no doubt it is thought questionable whether the supply of





DANCING FOR THE CURE OF THE SICK ; TESO COUNTRY.

(See p. 243.)

To face p. 267,



## Superstition

medicine would be sufficient to bleach the entire body.

The practice of medicine is not, in Africa, confined to the members of the profession ; any one may become a wizard for some malign purpose, though the mischief he works may require the services of a professional spell-monger to overcome it. Whenever there is a grudge to be paid off, the safest way to do it is to employ some form of spell to produce disease or misfortune, as described in Chapter XIV. For instance, you may make a mixture of dried frogs and lizards, pounded up together in a mortar, to induce an attack of leprosy. Simple methods of bringing down disaster on your enemy are to butt your head into the door of his hut when closed at night, or to dance round outside the euphorbia hedge. Evidence of being a wizard is said to be afforded by the fact that a man with these powers is able to send a hyæna to fetch and carry for him as one might send a dog.

But woe to the man who is caught in the act of working a spell on some enemy ! If seized he may be instantly killed, or tortured in ways too horrible to write about. He may be impaled upon a sharp stake and die miserably of exposure and starvation. If the worker of the spell is unknown, some professional must be called in to discover where the danger lies. Medicine must be fought with other medicine, and the weakest goes to the wall as in other phases of African life. Some are said to possess a medicine which can be buried round a village, and will have the effect of so

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

blinding the spell-worker that he will be unable to distinguish anything, but will mistake the village for a forest. Reluctance to come to European dispensaries for treatment is often due to the disbelief in spells known to exist in the mind of the white man ; it is all very well to go and get ointment to put on a sore place that you can see, but if you are in the toils of some strange malady, which must evidently be due to the machinations of some ill-disposed person (if only you could catch him ! ) it is evidently futile to go and be told to put out your tongue, to have a finger pressed on your wrist, and a glance cast into your eye, when the pain is in your legs and back ! It is, of course, wiser under the circumstances to go to a wizard who understands these spells, of which the European avowedly knows nothing.

A being whose identity was matter for discussion and speculation, but of whose reality and potency no doubts were entertained, was a certain Abeler, said to have appeared in Teso on several occasions. In appearance he resembled a tall man, with a white skin and a long nose, though some accounts deny the existence of features. For dress he used a bark-cloth, and his first appearance was after an eclipse of the sun, when the people had been saying that perhaps the Baganda had stolen the sun. Most of his time was spent sitting in a hut set apart for his use, and wherever he sat a spring of water gushed up and continued running in perpetuity. After disappearing for some time Abeler came again and was carried into a house which

## Superstition

immediately turned red all over inside. He was always carried, and the belief arose in consequence that he had not legs of the ordinary pattern. After one visit he gave orders that a hut was to be built for him on an island, and he was carried there and finally vanished; on another occasion he was carried over to Busoga and never returned. No attempt seems to be made to attribute to this personage any continuous influence during his absence, and only his mysterious arrival and supposed power of producing water and so forth gave him passing prestige. Probably some ingenious fellow, a Muganda or Musoga, took advantage of the universal credulity and curiosity of mankind to play a practical joke for his own profit. The only importance of the recital is as evidence of the powers naturally occurring to the native mind as congruous to such a being, and the readiness to attribute supernatural character to anything strange.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONCLUSIONS

"Take up the white man's burden !

To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild,  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

AS water can never rise higher than its source, so it is a commonplace of religious and national experience that no people can rise above its ideals, above the standard of the being it owns as supreme. The best that a worshipper can attain to is to assimilate himself to the character of the god he worships. When, therefore, races are conscious of no power higher than the malignant capacity for mischief and the hardly invoked assistance in trouble which is all that they ascribe to their local demons, they are not likely to emerge from the slough of mingled savagery and folly which earns for them the description "Half devil and half child."

The childish side of the nature lies on the surface and is immediately evident to all observers. There is the improvidence which lives for the day and hour, which makes plans for a week at a time

## Conclusions

and regards next year as a dim future too uncertain to be taken account of. Like an English child with a bag of sweets, an African presented with a hunch of meat sits down with glistening eyes and only rises from the fireside when not even a morsel of gristle remains ; to keep any even for the next day would be an altitude of self-control to which he makes no attempt to rise. With true childish glee he welcomes any novelty, however senseless it may be in itself. An entirely admirable disregard for all sense of proportion characterises his annoyance at petty hindrances or disappointments, or his delight at utterly paltry opportunities for self-advancement. He will clamour by the hour for compensation for some microscopic slight done to his dignity, and sulk by the day after the denial of a trivial request. Put him in charge of one or two of his compeers, and he at once assumes the importance of an emperor, tyrannising over his subordinates with all the exaggerated authority of one who knows that his power will be but short-lived.

In the presence and under the heel of the white man the devilish side of the African is kept under, hidden beneath a veneer of civilisation. The utter callousness to pain, the indifference to suffering whether in man or beast, the low value set on life, the degradation of all motives to a dead level of blind selfishness are all glossed over with a pretence of imitating the white man's ideals and practice, a pretence inspired by fear of censure and a vague sense of the superiority evidenced by

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

obviously greater skill and wisdom. After some years of contact with Europeans, the crude colours of undeveloped childhood, and the lurid hues of unrestrained brutality become painted over with the neutral grey of civilisation, through which we get glimpses of the natural colouring from time to time. Occasional outrages like the murder of Mr. London, the submarine telegraphist, at Mombasa, remind us of the passions slumbering beneath the surface, only waiting for the spark of cupidity or sudden vexation to burst into flame. Chiefs who have apparently settled down to sober British methods of administration, and have presided for years over orderly courts of justice, may break out into savagery at some specially exasperating instance of ingratitude or insolence. Two of the principal men in the Teso country offended in this way while we lived in the district. In one case a man was discovered by the chief in his private apartments with one of his wives; the outraged husband seized a spear and dealt summary justice on the spot. In the other case a man had been forgiven by the chief a heavy fine of cows. One evening, on returning home on his bicycle from his daily duties of superintending road-making, the chief was met in his courtyard by a party of his retainers with this same man under arrest. When he inquired the reason of his detention he was informed that the fellow had been caught up in the roof of the chief's big house armed with a spear. The man's sinister intentions being evident, in a fury at the ingratitude displayed the chief caught up a knife and hacked





A TESO VILLAGE.

Heaps of millet are underneath the banana leaves on the ground.



## Conclusions

off both the delinquent's ears. Immediately afterwards, impressed with the sense of his relapse from civilised standards of dignity and justice, the chief went off on a visit to a friend, apparently feeling safer at a distance from the scene of his passionate outburst and the Government station at Kumi. The official in charge, however, considering the provocation, took a lenient view of the case and allowed the chief to retain his position, while emphasising the gravity of the fault by exacting a fine of cattle and granting compensation to the mutilated man in the same kind. I was surprised, in discussing the case soon after with a Muganda agent at another place, to find that the loss of ears was reckoned a worse penalty than death. Minus ears, he said, a person was thenceforward an outcast, unable to appear at court, branded as a ne'er-do-well, the mark for the scorn and opprobrium of all who met him. The agent begged me to go to the Government and explain the nature of the act in the view of the black "man-in-the-street," or otherwise all the chiefs would be cutting off people's ears when provoked beyond endurance.

Let it not for one moment be supposed, however, that the African is an unlovable brute or an impossible simpleton. There are natural savages among the people of Uganda just as there are unmitigated scoundrels in plenty in every civilised land. But every tribe has also its natural gentlemen, men whose manners will bear comparison with those of the best educated European, and who can be as pleasant companions as most white men. The

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

Kimbugwe of Toro is one of these men who in cleanliness and demeanour has nothing to learn from the European. The Baganda probably consider most Englishmen very lacking in manners and by no means models of cleanliness. A missionary once claimed that the Muganda had learnt bathing from the English, and was promptly asked what was the English custom. "A bath every morning," was the reply. "Well, a Muganda has one every evening as well." Some natives, on the other hand, seem to be typical heathen, so totally steeped in all the habits, superstitions, and degradations of savage life that by no possibility could they become otherwise. Of these is the sub-chief in whose land we built our station in N'ora, Ebañat, or Areko. Although he sometimes came to our services and made no attempt to hinder his household from following their own inclination in that respect, he seemed to have no desire for any better standard than his own, no appreciation of the degradation of his own practices, and no sense of the advantages of European education. Of a similar type was old Lagoin, one of the Gan' chiefs. His theory of satisfactory relations with any one was based on the principle of *quid pro quo*. He was always quite willing to give you all he had that you required, provided you were agreeable on your part to handing over any article he fancied among your possessions. His flocks are at your disposal, oh, yes! and that is rather a nice chair you are sitting on, he has only a crazy wreck of a thing, and would like to exchange. A bullock

## Conclusions

for meat? He could not think of allowing a guest to buy one, but will gladly present one, and his rifle is very old and all the ammunition is used up, so you might like to give him another!

In short, life in Africa merely confirms the impression that human life is much the same all the world over, and that when a black man is nice he can be very nice, and when he is bad he is altogether horrid.

“Less black than we were painted?—Faith, no word of black was said;

The lightest touch was human blood, and that, you know runs red.”

To such a blend of childhood and devilry comes the missionary or administrator. If he is to be successful, he must worm his way somehow into the thoughts and feelings of those he is to teach or govern. He must live down the suspicions as to his object in coming to the country. By degrees the people will begin to understand that he has not come to buy wives because there are not enough in his own country; he is not a trader because he never buys ivory or offers goods for sale. The official has probably the purpose to get rich on the taxes, which doubtless he collects for his own benefit, but the missionary does not do even this. That he has come for any one's benefit but his own does not dawn upon the intelligence of the raw African for many months. Perhaps the gratuitous distribution of medicine and care

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

of the sick first suggest to the recipients that the white man is really not getting anything by it, although patients will sometimes ask for a present when their wounds have healed or their pains been charmed away. The extortions of their medicine-men have no doubt led them so to believe in the rapacity of all medical practitioners that they conclude some unseen source of remuneration is accountable for the gratuitous treatment of ailments, and they think they might as well have a share in the inexhaustible wealth.

The first lesson that the savage has to learn is one in motives, highest and best of which is love. He disbelieves in "something for nothing" because he has no conception at all of love. In many dialects there is no word for love; it has to share the service of one weak expression with other ideas, such as want, prefer, need. To love God and to prefer meat to potatoes are both expressed in Luganda, the language of the most advanced of all the tribes in the Protectorate, by the one word *okwagala*.

For the successful presentation of lofty motives a new atmosphere is essential. Though many may learn to make such motives a matter of habit, while pursuing the old course of daily life, yet if they are to be woven into the character, isolation from degrading influences, so far as is possible, is essential during the early years. For this purpose boarding schools are the most efficient instrument, and from our schools we hope to see emerge a generation of chiefs and teachers in whose hearts

## Conclusions

the child is developed and the devil crushed, if not eradicated.

An important part of the school curriculum must always be the supplying of new affections in the way of handicrafts to exercise their expulsive power upon minds so easily drifting into vicious habits of thought owing to want of wholesome occupation. Games such as football have a high value in the same direction, besides affording an opportunity for mutual understanding between white and black, teacher and taught. The expansion of mind produced by exercise in subjects like arithmetic, the widening of outlook due to study of geography, history, &c., and the discipline of training in general method and precision all have their value in building up a higher type of character.

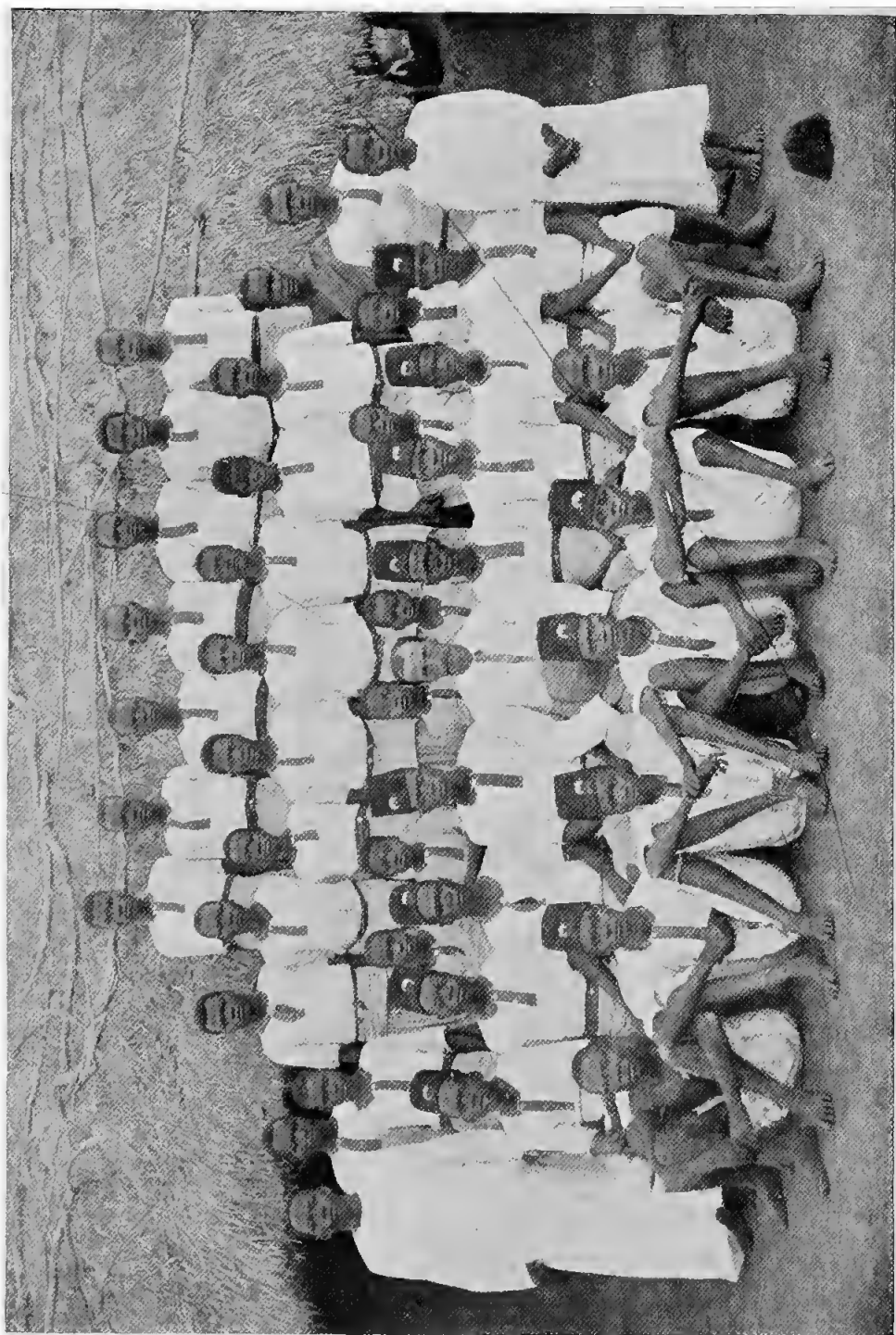
But highest of all instruments in the hand of the missionary is the religion of love and purity, of honour and truth. All education, physical and mental, is valueless unless there be instilled the principle and motive which can only be associated with the Christian religion. The capacity of the African for religion is undoubted; the ability of the black man to attain to great heights of devotion and self-sacrifice has been amply demonstrated where the truth has been taught in sincerity. The Church of Uganda has had her martyrs, her confessors, her heroes, of whom she may well be proud. And it is to the religious teaching and influence, which can have full scope in a boarding school, that we look for the production of noble character, of Christian gentlemen.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

At the base of all influence is knowledge of the native mind, and at the root of that tree of knowledge is familiarity with the language. The most easily understood European is the one best loved, as so strikingly exemplified by the prince of Uganda missionaries, G. L. Pilkington. None is ever so revered by the Baganda as the translator of their beloved Bible, the master of their idiom, the Muganda-tongued European. Among officials those are most respected and sought after who are able to make themselves readily understood without the aid of an interpreter; none is so avoided and even hated as the man who, floundering in the maze of ill-rendered idioms, doubly befogged by each successive translation until he hears what is said in a dialect he knows, or thinks he knows, at length gives judgment in terms that display woeful failure to appreciate the true bearing of the case. Of the former class were two officials, who have lost their lives in the service of the Empire, shouldering the white man's burden. One was the chief official in the Teso district when we first went there, Mr. S. Ormsby; the other died only recently in Toro, and I quote the following sentence from a letter written in English by a Muganda boy to his old schoolmaster: "He was welcome by all, and he never got tired in his conversation with the native big chiefs as well as with small people."

The best men and the most highly qualified are needed for the successful development of a country like Uganda; the work of administration, educa-





GROUP OF N'ORA SCHOOLBOYS, WITH TWO BAGANDA TEACHERS AND MR. H. G. DILLISTONE, MASTER OF THE SCHOOL.



## Conclusions

tion, and Christianisation is one calling for sanctified common sense, consecrated talents, and whole-hearted devotion. Uganda is—

“God’s present to our nation,  
Any one might have found it, but—  
His whisper came to me.”



## APPENDIX TO PART II

### FIFTY ADDITIONAL LUNYORO PROVERBS

1. " Ensegu yobukuru ehora omunwa " (" Learn the flute in your youth, or get sore lips "). Lit. : " The flute of old age chafes the lip." What may be easy enough to learn in youth may involve sorrow and hardship in advancing years.

2. " Ekirakulya ojuma nikiija " (" Forewarned is forearmed "). Lit. : " That which will eat you, you abuse as it comes."

3. " Enfura etetire enunka akanwa " (" Dirty teeth spoil the dandy "). The one lapse from accepted custom neutralises the effect of all finery.

4. " Ogurakujuna osangwa nagwo." Lit. : " (The stick) that is to save you is found in your hand." Comes near to our " A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

5. " Akutwara ekiro omusima bukiro " (" Night sorrow is morning joy "). Lit. : " He takes you by night, you thank him when morning breaks." The discomforts and dangers of night travel in Africa are the theme of more than one proverb.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

6. " Arakuita ayefora owanyu " (" Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light "). Lit.: " He who would kill you makes himself out as on your side."

7. " Arajuna enkoko agijuna nekyahababuka " (" Save your fowl before it stops flapping "). A materialised version of " While there's life there's hope."

8. " Obuculezi bwentama tibuhihinda okulya ebigogo " (" Meek as it looks, the sheep eats plaintain bark "). A very favourite delicacy with all domestic animals in Uganda is the plaintain bark in which salt has been wrapped up.

9. " Akuha nomuha ngonzi tifa " (" Mutual gifts cement friendship "). It is difficult for the raw native to appreciate affection that is not expressed in some tangible form, such as a coat or a handful of salt.

10. " Akanyama kabisi kahumbura omukaro." Nearly: " A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Lit.: " A bit of fresh meat livens up the dried."

11. " Omubu oguli owabu bagweta rwakinumi " (" *Their* mosquito won't bite me "). Illustrates the want of sympathy with annoyances that do not immediately touch the speaker.

12. " Ija tulirane, akuboineho akawe " (" Mr. Go-shares is after your bit "). Lit.: " ' Come let us eat together ' ; he has seen your piece." Ex-

## Appendix to Part II

travagant readiness to pool possessions is to be regarded with suspicion, as probably implying "dearth in the land."

13. "Araire kubi bamumanyi'ra amazinduka." ("Early rising shows a bad night"). Bed has no attractions in the morning for one who has perhaps passed the night too far from the fire, under a leak in the roof, or with unwelcome companions, of minute proportions.

14. "Nambere omutuma gurara, nuho amaguru gazindukira" ("Wheresoever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together"). Lit.: "Where the heart sleeps there the legs get up early."

15. "Bamukwata bamuta, buli akanywana kara" ("A prisoner let go foresaw his arrest"). Lit.: "They caught him and let him go, that means he made friends to start with." Having committed an offence the malefactor proceeds to make friends among the court officials, and so procures his acquittal when arrested, or is allowed to escape custody.

16. "Omukaikuru nacwa omusoga ngu Amani gange ndifa nago" ("An old woman snaps a castor-oil tree stem and says 'I shall die in full vigour'"). The tree named being hollow in section and quite flimsy, her boast is based on worthless premises. So the proverb warns against taking a false criterion of one's own strength.

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

17. "Atamanya obujune bwembwa agibinga mu kyoto" ("He who does not know the sorrows of the dog drives it away from the fireplace"). The inveterate fondness of the African cur for the hot fire or a bed in the ashes is taken as typical of anything that may appeal to another while making no impression upon yourself.

18. "Asendekerezebwa omunywaniwe akarora enyuma, obutini bwawe olifa nabwo" ("If you don't feel safe with a friend, you'll die a coward"). Lit.: "He that is seen on his way by his blood-brother and looks still behind him—your cowardice will accompany you to your grave."

19. "Nkumanya nankumanya tibaswagirangana omukubi" ("Mutual affection gives each his share"). Lit.: "Messrs. I-know-you and I-know-you do not gobble up one another's sauce"). *Omukubi* is the tasty part of a meal, and may consist of meat, herbs, semsem, or ground-nuts, into sauces of one of which the morsels of solid food are dipped.

20. "Nyantagambirwa akambukira omu bwato bwibumba" ("Miss Obstinate sails in a china boat"). The precarious situation of one who entirely declines to follow all advice.

21. "Okuikiriza tikuhinda okwanga" ("The privilege of the ladies, to change their mind"). Lit.: "To consent does not hinder from refusing." It is to be feared that the average African's promise is only too nearly related to piecrust.

## Appendix to Part II

22. "Malemesa ija ozike 'so ngu Nagenda aije" ("Mr. Can't would like his father to walk to his own funeral"). Lit.: "Mr. Can't, come and bury your father; he says He walks, let him come." He so grudges trouble that he is annoyed at having to help carry the corpse.

23. "Wanjuna yenda tehwayo" ("One can never cease eating"). Lit.: "The 'Help me' of the stomach never ends." Taken as typical of what are invariable daily occurrences.

24. "Empaka ezitahoire zireta okukungana" ("Too much discussion means a quarrel"). A very salutary maxim in a country where nothing is so much enjoyed as a lively argument, usually about a subject totally trivial, but carried on as if the universe depended on the issue.

25. "Kaguza ekyorabona, okuzimu balyayo ki?" ("Ask a question that has an answer! What do they eat beyond the grave?") Most useful to silence one who is fond of asking foolish questions that are obviously beyond the scope of human knowledge. It is sufficient to quote the first two words, which suggest to the questioner that he has asked for information as unattainable as details of the diet of the Shades.

26. "Birijja ndigura akajwara nanyina nkanda" ("Procrastination is the thief of finery"). Lit.: "They will come and I will buy; he and his mother dress in skins." The son always wants to wait until the *next* pedlar comes along, and so ends by never

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

having anything better than hides either for himself or his mother.

27. "Baruleka nuruleta?" ("Do they leave it while it draws?") That is, Does any one leave off sucking at the *ruseke*, or long tube for beer-drinking, as long as anything comes up it? The African appetite for food or drink is limited solely by the supply.

28. "Asasibwa nuwe ayara" ("It is pain craves the pillow"). This corresponds to the scriptural, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

29. "Ayekanika ekiro omuirima gumuiha enono" ("Night haste means morning pain"). Lit.: "He who hurries along at night the darkness will rob him of a toe-nail." Resembles our "More haste, less speed." The rootlets, stones, &c., left in native paths constantly cause injuries such as this proverb suggests.

30. "Akasoro katakagwire ngu Rukoba rwamahembe gange?" ("Don't count your chickens before they are hatched"). Lit.: "Do you say, 'Give me a skin to go with my horns' before the antelope drops?"

31. "Omunyaibanja wawe okufa afuruka" ("Your debtor dies by flitting"). Just as in English slums rent is escaped by frequent stealthy changes of abode, so in Uganda it is a favourite trick to live near the border between two kingdoms and change from one to the other as the



## Appendix to Part II

taxes fall due on one side or the other. Remission is granted to new settlers in any district for sufficient time to allow them to get their land under cultivation. The same dodge may be tried to evade payment of private debts.

32. "Embogo erafa tehu'ra ebigwara" ("The buffalo dies if he's deaf to the horns"). Long horns of wood are blown on setting out on a hunt, and would, of course, be a sufficient warning to an animal sagacious enough to comprehend their significance; the human application is evident.

33. "Mboha nyenka akamara ebigoye naboha" ("Two heads are better than one"). Lit.: "'I'll tie by myself,' used all the string in tying."

34. "Engambigambi agamba akaisireka" ("Chatterbox talks nonsense").

35. "Akatali kawe otuma noimuka" ("You have to get up to some one else's boy"). That is, if you want obedience. He will take orders from any one except his master only under compulsion, so it is useless to order him about from your armchair.

36. "Amaizi gaita ngamanya" ("The water drowns, I know it"). The converse of "Pride will have a fall." The wise man does not attempt to swim or ford until the flood has passed.

37. "Esa, Esa, omuigo nugukururwa, embwa teija namberoli" ("In vain the net is spread in

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

sight of any bird "). Lit. : " (Call) Esa, Esa, with a stick trailing behind you, and the dog will not come to you." Esa is the word used to call a dog or other tame animal as we use " Puss " for a cat.

38. " Oukitalirire nyina ngu Nyenkya turase'ra " (" He whose mother the beast has not eaten says, ' We will search in the morning ' "). A somewhat heartless attitude ; altruism is hardly learned.

39. " Ose'ra empango kunu ekuli ha ibega " (" You search for your glasses with them on your nose "). Lit. : " You look for your axe while it is on your shoulder."

40. " Amaiya namaiya gahira owibumba " (" *Per laborem ad honorem* "). Lit. : " Coming and coming rejoices the man of clay." The potter's toils in fetching loads of clay from the swamp merely suggest to him the profit on his pots.

41. " Enju endolerezi eyanura entahi yayo " (" A household that looks on makes thin its companion "). The lazy ones watch the others cooking and rely on their generosity for an invitation to the meal, when perhaps there is not enough for so many.

42. " Muzizi oweraita ati Ndarara nyambukire " (" If you fear the Muzizi, sleep on the farther bank "). The Muzizi is the biggest river in Mwenge, and when in flood is crossed on rafts of papyrus stems, piled up and lashed together. The wise traveller always camps on the far bank of a

## Appendix to Part II

river, lest it rise in the night and prevent his crossing.

43. "Ikungani itekwa babiri" ("It takes two to make a quarrel").

44. "Omukama otakatabaireyo tomujuma" ("Don't abuse the King before you've been to court"). Do not judge of any one's intentions or character without full acquaintance.

45. "Omwana atakagenda ngu Mau nuwe acumba obunura" ("The sucking child says, 'Mother is the best cook'"). It is a common fault to pronounce a decided preference for a certain article or person without making trial of any alternative.

46. "Obunura bubiri bwata amatama" ("Two flavours confuse the palate"). Enforces much the same lesson as "Ye cannot serve two masters."

47. "Okukuranga omu bafu bakuranga omu bahuta" ("The dead are announced among the wounded"). Illustrates the common desire everywhere to mitigate the shock of bad news.

48. "Omwana mubi ajumya nyina" ("A bad son gives a bad name to his mother").

49. "Ekyoma tekirema omuhesi" ("The iron has no power over the smith"). This is also expressed, as in the Bible, by "The clay has no power over the potter."

## On the Backwaters of the Nile

50. "Ibanja eriritwara nyoko liija nologaya" ("The debt you despise will cost you your mother"). A reminiscence of the days when personal slavery of relatives might be enforced for long overdue debts. The rates of interest demanded may be no less exorbitant in Africa than in the web of a money-lending spider in Europe.





## INDEX

- ABELER, 268  
 Aboga, 167, 175  
 Acoli, 18  
 Agglutination of language, 15  
 Albert Lake, 7  
 Ambition of African, 160  
 Amon'i, 262  
 Antelope, spearing, 224  
 Appetite, Gan', 114  
 Arabic, 25  
 Architecture, native, 93, 95  
 Areko, 180, 274  
 Aspirated consonants, 25  
 Atepi River, 70  
 Awic, 71  
 Axe, 211  
  
 BAAMBA, 77  
 Babies—  
     African, 177  
     toilet, 171  
 Baganda, 31, 49, 66, 110, 114,  
     121, 131, 160, 204  
 Bagisu, 11, 18, 56, 113  
 Bagwer'e, 14  
 Bahuku, 11, 217  
 Bakeni, 13, 14  
 Baker, Sir Samuel, 49  
 Bakonjo, 7  
 Bananas, 131, 148  
  
 Banyamwenge, 123, 124  
 Banyoro, 133  
 Bari, 25, 185  
 Basese, 74  
 Baskets, 212  
 Basoga, 9  
 Bazaars, 204  
 Beer, 12, 42  
 Bells, 264  
 Birds, 29  
 Bows, 224  
 Boys, black and white, 182  
 Brooms, 220  
 Buckley, Ven. Archdeacon, 58  
 Budama, 18  
 Bugahya, 7  
 Buganda, 4, 148, 229  
 Bugoma, 7  
 Building, 41, 42, 52, 60  
 Bululu, 27  
 Bunyoro, 4, 7  
 Bura, 70, 75  
 Burglary, 59, 210  
 Burial, 250  
 Burns, 172, 249  
 Busindi, 7  
 Buso, 56  
 Busoga, 9, 172  
 Butiti, 5, 40, 43  
 Butuku, 5, 43, 69, 70

# Index

CANNIBALS, 11, 113  
 Canoes, 218  
 Cattle, 8, 12, 101  
 Chairs, native, 216  
 Character, 23, 33  
 Charms, 266  
 Chiefs, Patiko, 152, 155  
 Child life, 173  
 Children—  
     method of carrying, 169  
     attacked by beasts, 172  
 Christianity, 35, 77, 79, 147,  
     154, 178, 184, 251, 277  
 Civilisation, influence of, 165,  
     201  
 Clothing—  
     introduction of, 201  
     odd uses of, 199  
 Cold, 21, 127  
 Conies, 45  
 Cooking in Teso, 112  
 Copi, 14, 47  
 Cotton, 28  
 Courts—  
     native, 157  
     attending, 156, 226  
 Crocodiles, 48, 103, 236, 248  
 Cultivation—  
     in Bunyoro, 50, 109  
     in Patiko, 110  
 Cupping, 246  
 Curios, 189, 203, 219  
  
 DANCES, 231, 243  
 Demons, 256, 258, 260  
 Dialects, 8, 12, 14, 17, 24, 25,  
     34, 52  
 Dinkas, 17  
 Dogs, 135, 223, 266, 284

Drawings, native, 214  
 Dwarf, 79  
  
 EBAÑAT, 180, 274  
 Edeke, 239, 240, 261  
 Education, home, 184  
 Eggs, 115, 259, 263  
 Egg-shells, 263  
 Elgon, 11, 56, 113  
 Entebe, 2  
 Etiquette, African, 163  
  
 FAMINE, 10, 50, 56  
 Fashions, 183, 196  
 Fever, spirillum, 30  
 First-born, 151, 181  
 Fishing, 104, 119, 176  
 Flute, 228, 234  
 Food supplies, 108, 205  
 Forest, Toro, 69  
 Forge, 206  
 Frogs, 138  
 Fruit, 120  
  
 GAME, 20, 29  
 Games, English, 232  
 Gedge, Lake, 27  
 Girls, employment of, 174  
 Gondokoro, 2, 25, 76  
 Gondolas, Bakeni, 103  
 Government, British, 10, 31,  
     36, 51, 159, 160, 278  
 Granaries, 100, 101, 104, 111,  
     214  
 Greetings, 33, 51  
 Guinea-fowl, 29, 229  
 Guinea-worm, 76  
 Guns, 23, 115, 199  
 Guruguru, 20



# Index

- HABITS, Bakeni, 103  
 Hairdressing—  
     in Bunyoro, 186  
     in Teso and Karamojo, 186  
 Harps, 228  
 Hemp-smoking, 32  
 Herdsmen, youthful, 173  
 Hippo-hunting, 72, 118  
 Hockey, 225  
 Hoe handles, 207  
 Hoes, 110, 205  
 Hospitality, native ideas of,  
     77  
 Houses—  
     Bunyoro, 93  
     Teso, 99  
     Bagisu, 94  
     Bakeni, 102  
     Gan', 95  
 Hunters, Gan', 20, 115, 148,  
     169, 182, 230  
 Husbands, 147, 148, 175  
  
 ICE, 46  
 Idiom, 126, 132, 144  
 Immorality, 145, 151  
 Incantations, 243  
 Industries, 220  
 Infant—  
     suffering, 170, 172  
     betrothal, 152  
  
 JIENG, 17  
 Jiggers, 57  
 Jinja, 28  
 Johnson, Rev. T. B., 41  
 Joluo, 18  
 Judicial work, 61, 156  
 Justice, summary, 272  
  
 KABAREGA, KING, 5  
 Kabarole, 5, 39, 42  
 Kakindu, 11, 27, 28  
 Kampala, 2  
 Kamuli, 78  
 Karamojo, 35, 186, 217  
 Kasagama, 43, 156, 257  
 Katikiros, 160  
     of Toro, 157  
 Keyu, Mount, 51  
 Kicumu, 79, 264  
 Kilindini, 2  
 Kioga, Lake, 13, 14, 17  
 Kitagweta, 5, 181  
 Knives, 209  
 Kolimon', 77  
 Kumam, 18, 34  
 Kumi, 32, 58, 249  
  
 LABOKE, 20  
 Lakes in Teso, 27  
 Language, reducing to writing,  
     128  
 Lan'o, 18, 97  
 Latuka, 25  
 Letters, native, 40, 278  
 Lightning, 40, 42  
     cure for, 263  
 Lion, 131, 142  
 Litigation, 152, 155  
 Lloyd, Mr. A. B., 47, 51  
 Luganda, 39  
  
 MADI, 25, 105  
 Marriage, 145  
 Masai, 34, 150  
 Mboga, 40  
 Meat hunger, 113

# Index

Medicine, native, 240, 246, 267  
 Medicine men, 239  
 Mind, native, 126, 275  
 Miro, 55  
 Moon worship, 257  
 Morris, Mr. E. G., 250  
 Mortar, 216  
 Mountains of Moon, *see Ruwenzori*  
 Mpologoma River, 13  
 Mubuku, 44  
 Murchison Falls, 47  
 Mushrooms, 119  
 Music, 75, 228, 234, 255  
 Mwenge, 5, 43, 49, 74, 84, 147, 206  
 Mweso, 227

NABUMALE, 58, 114  
 Nagana, 55  
 Naming of infants—  
     in Bunyoro, 177  
     in Teso, 179  
 Namuziga, 225  
 Nandi, 34  
 Nile River, 14, 47  
 Nilotics, 14, 49, 50, 154, 226  
 Njala, 180, 244  
 Nkole, 8  
 N'ora, 58, 65, 179, 187

OBONA, 51  
     funeral of, 254  
 Ogwok, chief, 96  
 Operation, 248  
 Ormsby, Mr. S., 278  
 Ornaments—  
     Patiko, for dances, 190  
     Teso, 194

Ostrich, tame, 71  
 Oyor, 174, 181  
  
 PAIL, wooden, 216  
 Paint, red, 193  
 Papyrus, 13, 102, 262, 264  
 Parents, drunken, 172  
 Passive voice, 35  
 Patiko, departure from, 47  
 Payments, marriage, 151  
 Pele, game of, 228  
 Phonograph records, 53, 234, 255  
 Physique, 22, 32  
 Pilkington, Mr. G. L., 278  
 Pingiri, 27  
 Pioneer work, 61  
 Pipes, 219  
 Plasters, 246  
 Podi, 55  
 Poison, 242  
 Polygamy, 149  
 Pottery, 219, 260  
 Power, love of, 160  
 Prices, 204  
 Proverbs of Banyoro, 132, 281  
  
 RADCLIFFE, COLONEL DELMÉ,  
     51  
 Railway, 11, 28  
 Rain-making, 262  
 Rats, hunting, 113, 229  
 Rivers, 3, 19  
 Roads, 21, 30  
 Roscoe, Rev. J., 59  
 Rupees, 221  
 Ruwenzori Mountains, 5, 7, 21, 44, 77, 91  
     sunrise on, 6

# Index

## SACRIFICES—

Patiko, 259  
 Teso, 261  
 Salisbury, Lake, 13, 27, 72  
 Salt, 85, 175, 176, 282  
 Samwiri, chief in Mwenge,  
     77  
 Schools, boarding, 65, 276  
 Scorpions, 64  
 Semei Kakungulu, 31, 160  
 Serere, 78  
 Sex, equality of, among Gan',  
     147  
 Shaving in N'ora, 187  
 Shields, 210  
 Shilluks, 17  
 Shula, 18  
 Sickie, Teso, 210  
 Singing, 229, 231, 235, 255  
 Skeens, Mrs., 58  
 Sleeping sickness, 10, 56  
 Smallpox, 114, 245  
 Smoke, 91  
 Snakes, 247, 250, 259  
 Sofa, primitive, 217  
 Songs, Patiko, 235, 255  
 Sorcery, 241, 249, 267  
 Spears, 208  
     uses of, 209  
 Steamers, 28  
 Stools, 216  
 Sudd, 13, 102  
 Suicide, 251  
 Surgery, native, 245  
 Swimming, 20

TEACHERS, visiting, 79, 264

## Teso—

country, 26, 58  
 exports, 28  
 language, 34  
 Ticks, 30  
 Toro, 4, 38  
 Totem, 238  
 Toys, 222  
 Trades, 220  
 Translation, difficulties of, 36,  
     130  
 Traps—  
     for hunting, 117  
     fish, 119  
 Tsetse, 9, 55  
 Turkana, 26  
 Twins, 179, 253, 259, 265

## VEGETATION, 3

Ventilation, 93

## Villages—

Gan', 24, 96  
 Teso, 100

WALKER, VEN. ARCHDEACON,  
     74

Weapons, 208, 210, 212

Wedding ceremony in Bun-  
     yoro, 152

White babies, 266

Wife, choosing, among Gan',  
     150

Wild beasts, 29, 172

Wrestling, 225

**The Gresham Press,  
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED,  
WOKING AND LONDON.**







